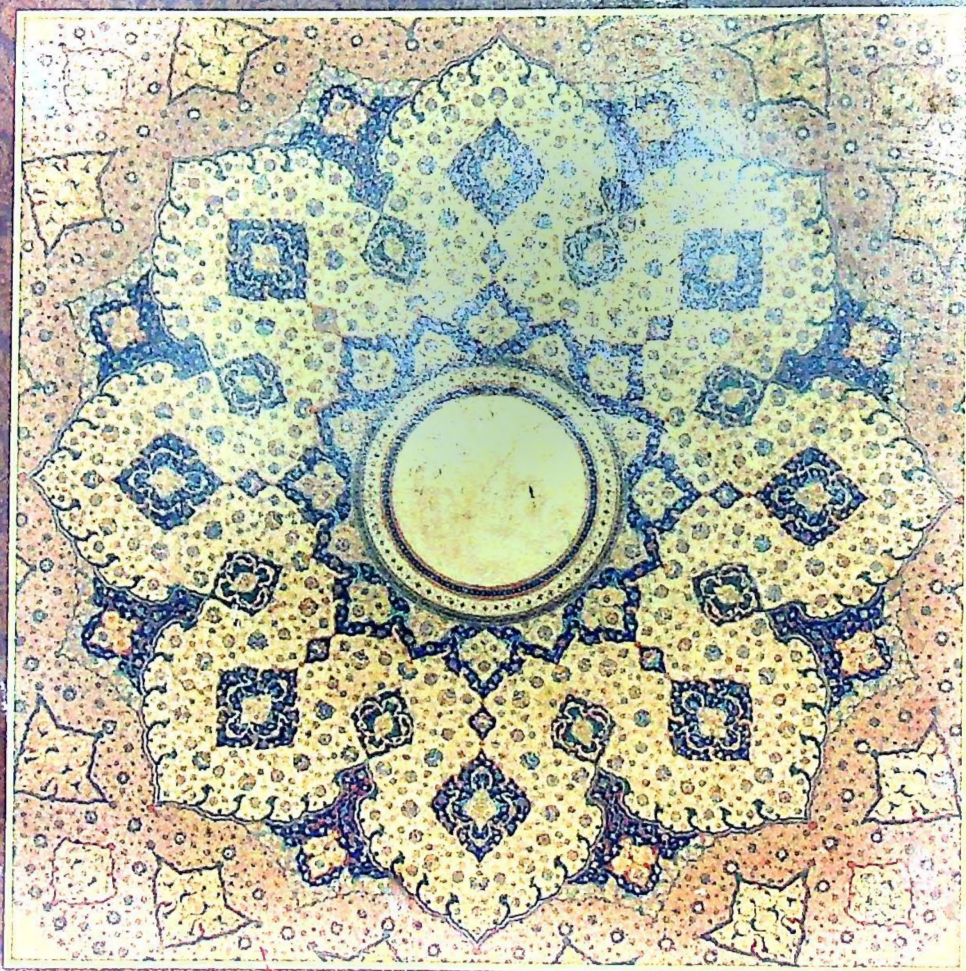


GREAT POETS OF CLASSICAL PERSIAN



R. M. Chopra

Great Poets of Classical Persian

R.M.Chopra



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**This book is dedicated to
the memory of
my revered grandfather
Late Dr. Daulat Ram Chopra
a physician by profession
and
a poet of Urdu and Persian
by disposition**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

MR. RAVINDRA MOHAN CHOPRA (born 14th January, 1934 in Hafizabad, West Punjab is a worthy son, inheriting dedication to social work and literary disposition from his worthy father Late Dr. Hira Lall Chopra, M.A., (Punjab), D. Litt. (Tehran), the well-known litterateur and social worker of Kolkata, who was known for his In-Depth study of Oriental Religions – Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism.

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His love for literature and fondness for literary activities is proverbial. He has authored the following learned books -

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His writing is free flowing, deeply absorbing, eminently readable and a voyage of learning; it brings elegance, ease and sweetness.

The Publisher

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P R E F A C E

The Iranians from ancient times are devoted lovers of song and poetry. Most of them are poets by temperament and as such more inclined to poetry than prose.

Persian, as this incarnation of the language from Pahlavi or Middle Persian has come to be called, has been dated from the eighth century A.D. True, fragments of this Persian verse have come down to us but the history of the Persian literature proper, in fact, begins with the court poets and philosophers of the tenth century Samanid dynasty (874-999) who established in Khurasan a brilliant court that was to patronize learning and letters and rejuvenate *Zaban-i-Farsi*, or Persian, after a long interlude which became as the official language of the court. So much so for any scholar in any branch of knowledge, it became a pre-requisite to have the ability to write in verse.

The period when Iranian rulers were in power was a short interlude before arrival of the Turks on the scenario who patronized Persian language and Iranian civilization. They were followed by Mongols and Taimurids in Iran and Central Asia and Mughals in India under whom Persian language, literature, sciences and fine arts flourished with amazing rapidity from the borders of China in the east to the Anatolian peninsula in the west, including the Indian Subcontinent.

It is quite remarkable that Persian language has not only survived but has also thrived for more than a millennium in its present form. It began in Khurasan and for centuries it dominated the high culture of Central Asia, Iran, Azerbaijan,

Iraq, Anatol'ya and the whole of northern part of the Indian Subcontinent. The main reason for this is the rich classical Persian literature and, especially classical Persian poetry, which flourished continuous and uninterrupted as the kings supported poets in their courts to provide entertainment to the court as storytellers as well as their semi-official biographers and historians with a slant towards establishing a good legacy for the king. As a result, classical Persian poetry started with *qasidah* (panegyric ode) which comprised praise and flattery, and developed other genres such as epics (heroic deeds) which honoured heroic figures of Iran; *rubai's* (quatrains), which gave philosophers an opportunity to express gems of wisdom; the *ghazals* (lyrics), which fitted well romantic, mystical and literary works; *mesnavis*, which described fables and historical events; and *qattas* (short poems), which are often used for satire and topical form in mystical verse.

Between the tenth and the seventeenth centuries there were legions of poets of exceptional poetic talent, great insight, and uncanny genius who embellished Persian poetry with their masterpieces which has made classical Persian poetry as one of the great literatures of the world. Out of the multitudinous poets, in my estimation, there are twelve most brilliant stars in the constellation of classical Persian poetry who have particularly illuminated and brightened the horizon of classical Persian literature, and are: Ferdowsi, Omar Khayyam, Nizami, Attar, Rumi, Sa'di, Hafiz, Jami, Saib and Qa'ani from Iran, and Amir Khusrow and Bedil from India. These poets have

also exercised profound influence on other literatures of the world by the nobility of their thoughts and rhythmic rendition of their poetry.

In this anthology of aforementioned great poets of classical Persian poetry, I have briefly attempted to throw light on their special contributions made to Persian poetry and have also tried to dispel some of the unsubstantiated prevalent notions about them and their poetic renderings, which, I am sure, will be of considerable interest to the students and scholars of classical Persian poetry.

Apart from the anthology of great poets of classical Persian, I have added in the Appendices of this book texts of three lectures, two delivered by me in Iran Society, Kolkata, and one in Viswa Bharati, Shantiniketan. I have also added a comprehensive glossary dealing with Sufistic terms which, I believe, will be found useful in allegorical interpretation of Sufic terms extensively used by Sufis in classical Persian poetry.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most notable forms of literature in the world is poetry. From ancient times, Iran has always been a land of poetry. The beginnings of Iran's poetry are lost in the mists of antiquity because Iran has had an extremely complex political and literary history which have made it obscure in the absence of any written records. We start with Pahlavi language, or the Middle Persian language, which traditionally defines the writings of Zoroastrians, compiled in the Sassanian period (226-642 A.D.), and form the surviving Pahlavi literature, as the part of the literary heritage of Sassanian era.

Quite important in the development of Pahlavi literature and extremely relevant are the *Denkard* (1) and the *Bundahishn* (2), which are in Pahlavi, or the Middle Persian, and are *Zand* (commentary) to the *Avesta*. (3) Some other Sassanian literature was that of court literature, including epics and poetry, but also works on scientific subjects such as astronomy, astrology, geography, and medicine. (4) Scholars have also traced Iranian epics to Parthian times (256 B.C.-226 A.D.), and this tradition was continued in the Islamic period in many epic works which magnify the pre-Islamic kingly tradition (5). Pahlavi, or the Middle Persian, had developed almost all the genres of writing under the Sassanians in Iran.

It was from 635 A. D. that the Arabs commenced subjugation of the Iranian Empire of the Sassanians. First they captured Damascus and, in the following year, inflicted a crushing defeat on the Iranians at Qudsiya. It was in 637 that Ctesiphon (Al-Madain) was captured by the Arab. and by 642 A.D. almost the entire Iranian Empire was annexed by them. (6)

After the conquest of Iran, a knowledge of Arabic became necessary for the Iranians for it was the only language of the new rulers and their state, and of the religion they brought with them; subsequently, Arabic also became language of learning of Iranians. Though Pahlavi continued to be spoken in private life, Arabic became the dominant and official language. Iranians also learned it with alacrity, and immersed themselves in Muslim culture through the medium of Arabic. Their most eminent men of letters and the secretarial classes were well versed in Arabic as well as Persian. Bilingualism among the cultural elite in Iran became a notable feature of the era. (7)

Viewed objectively, it can be said, Arab invasion of Iran did not bring an end to the use of Pahlavi or Persian language, both spoken and written, but heralded a process of evolution of the language. It was this process of evolution that the Middle Persian, or the language of the Sassanians, was transformed into Neo-Persian, literature of which in general and poetry in particular, emerged in the 9th century A.D. (8) In one particular direction Iran was greatly indebted to Arabia from where she derived the Arabic script. "The Pahlavi script was confusing, defective and sometimes intriguing; because one letter in the Pahlavi script could be read in two or three different ways. This led to the confusion and misunderstanding. The Arabic script was clear and easy and by adopting it Iranians were free from the bother entailed by the use of their native script".(9)

It is true Persian poetry in particular, and Persian literature in general, suffered a set-back after the conquest of Iran by the Arabs in the middle of the seventh century A.D. and literary activity in Persian in Iran came to a standstill and stagnated for a while. Arabic replaced Pahlavi and became the language of the elite in Iran who also started writing in Arabic. (10)

One vital factor in the evolution of Neo-Persian was that after its emergence, it spread from its heartland to Central Asia, or Transoxiana. For their conquests, the Arabs enlisted indigenous people in their armies, who did not know Arabic and also did not speak standardized Persian but a medley of different dialects. Nevertheless, the Persian of the time served as the *lingua franca* for these enlisted men. They spread this new version in the conquered areas from Azerbaijan to Central Asia. It was in Greater Khurasan where most of the Iranians had migrated after the Arab conquest of Iran. These Iranians, with their roots in Iranian culture, got converted to Islam, but in their habits, manners and tastes retained much of their Sassanian ancestry, rose to power in Semi-independent principalities and reverted to the use of Neo-Persian on its emergence in administration and in their day-to-day working and, in the process, rejuvenated Persian language.

Upon the decline of the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad towards the latter half of the ninth century A.D., semi-independent Muslim principalities rose, most notably founded in the Greater Khusrasan headed by truer Iranian blood, and established brilliant courts and patronized learning and letters in Neo-Persian. Thus began the re-establishment of Iran's national life and culture and laid the foundation for a kind of renaissance into the realm of letters. It was almost after a lapse of two centuries interest was rejuvenated in the Persian language, or *Zaban-i-Farsi*, or Neo-Persian. (11)

According to tradition, Persian poetry was nursed for the subsequent two hundred years by the fostering care of three princely dynasties of Iranian descent, namely, Tahirid (820-872), Saffarid (860-1003) and Samanid (874-999), and was destined to grow in grace and stature to its old dominant

position in literature. It was in this period that the thin register of Persian poetry which began in the eighth century changed into the manly tone with all the virility of the race under Rudaki, Daqiqi and, above all, Ferdowsi. (12)

PERSIAN POETRY

BRIEF HISTORY OF EARLY DEVELOPMENT:

A brief history of early development in Persian poetry is given here.

UNDER TAHIRIDS:

Tahirids (821-873 A.D.) were an Iranian dynasty of Dehqan (aristocratic land-owners) origin, who enjoyed autonomous rule in Khurasan under the Abbasids. Tahirids achieved some fame as scholars or poets themselves right from the founder Tahir bin Al-Hussain onwards. Although some modern scholars are at variance as to Tahirid's attitude towards Persian; (13) however, from the Persian literature appearing in Khurasan under the first Saffarid rulers (860-1003 A.D.), one can surmise that "it must have had precursors in the Tahirid period, as indeed when Abu-Mansur (governor) visited Merv, he was greeted by an ode in Persian".(14)

UNDER SAFFARIDS:

Saffarids ruled in eastern Iran, from 861 to 1003, from a base in their home province of Seistan. The rise of Yaqub bin Lais and Amar bin Lais, in 861 from Seistan, marks the first significant breach in the territorial integrity of the Abbasid Caliphate because these Saffarids attained power solely by sword, and Yaqub even openly proclaimed his mistrust and contempt for the Abbasids and their representatives that "the Abbasids had based their rule on treachery and trickery." (15)

All wielders of power in medieval Islam attracted to themselves followings of poets and litterateurs who eulogized their masters; virtues of their exploits; and early Saffarids were no exception to this process. Yaqub's early success against the

Kharijite bands of Afghanistan and his overthrow of the Tahirids prompted poets to compose panegyrics on him, (16) but these were all in Arabic which he could not understand. Therefore, vizier (chief secretary) Muhammad b. Wasif began writing verses in Neo-Persian, lauding his master's exploits. (17) Wasif was among the early poets of Neo-Persian which had already developed towards the end of the 9th century.

In the later 9th century, the Saffarids gave impetus to a renaissance of Neo-Persian literature and culture. Under their rule, eastern Iran witnessed the emergence of prominent Persian poets such as Fayrouz Mashriqi, Abu Salik al-Jirjani, and Muhammad b. Wasif. (18)

UNDER SAMANIDS:

Samanid dynasty (819-999 A.D.) was an Iranian dynasty of Dehqan (aristocratic landowners) origin that arose in what is now eastern Iran and Uzbekistan, and is known for the impulse it gave to Iranian national sentiment and learning in Persian. Persian became the official language of court. The dynasty was founded by Saman. Khuda who converted to Islam.(19) The main cities of Samarqand and Bukhara became cultural centres. Persian literature flourished. The Samanids revived Iranian culture and language by patronizing Rudaki (858- ca 941), Bal'ami, historian, and Daqiqi (c 935/942 – 976/981) and Ferdowsi (940-1020) poets (20). Philosophy and history studies were encouraged and the foundations of Iranian Islamic culture were laid. (21)

On the whole, Persian literature was rejuvenated. Bal'ami translated Tabari's History into Persian from Arabic. Many religious texts were written in Persian which are extant from this period. With the translation and commentaries on the Holy Quran in Persian, Persian language began to exhibit its capacity

as a malleable language for conveying religious ideas and spiritual meditation along with performing administrative and cultural functions. (22) Thus were laid the foundations of Classical Persian poetry. It is in the Classical Persian Poetry, which relies on tradition and cultural memory, that the strong connections into the pre-Islamic past are displayed in various ways: in its metre, as well as its vocabulary and major themes. (23) It is therefore from Classical Persian Poetry that one can study the import of loan-words and syntactical structure from Arabic.

When Neo-Persian emerged as a literary medium it turned out to be far superior to the Semetic speech which had dominated over the past two centuries. With subsequent shaping and polishing, Neo-Persian was made a vehicle of one of the greatest literatures of mankind. (24) The progress of Neo-Persian was from Bukhara to Tabriz, and from Ghazni to Shiraz. Throughout the land, particularly in Khurasan, a significant part of pre-Islamic Iranian culture was preserved and this proved to be a highly significant phenomenon in the history of literature as well of the Muslim world. (25)

In the linguistic sphere, Persian transmitted to the Muslim world a substantial collections of Iranian art, tales, fables, myths as well as history, moral instructions, political advice, and religious treatises derived from pre-Islamic era. The great literary achievement of the Abbasid age and the remarkable effervescence owes much to Iranian contribution, of course made through Arabic.

ANALYSIS OF EARLY PERSIAN POETRY

Persian poetry, right from the 9th century A.D. has always been given pride of place in Persian literature. It distinguished itself clearly from prose not only in terms of rhyme and rhythm, but also in the artful play between explicit meaning or meanings and implicit nuances.

The early Persian poets saw the aim of their art primarily as the continuation of Arabic poetry in another language. For them poems that were not written according to the established rules of Arabic prosody did not count as serious poetry.

The prosody of classical Persian verse is based on the distich, called *bayt*, which consists of half lines that are metrically identical. Rhyme is used in all kinds of Persian poetry but its distribution provides one of the main distinctions for the poetic forms. A fundamental type is *monorhyme* the repetition of the same rhyming sound at the end of each distich, with the exception of the first hemistich which also uses that same rhyme. (26)

This technique appeared firmly ensconced in the poetry of Persian poets from the very beginning which remained effective until the 20th century, when this traditional prosody was challenged into question. Until then, in a Persian poem, the arrangement of rhyme defined its form. A form was considered classical when both parts of the first *bayt* rhyme. The most common and simple poem consisted of two *bayts*. (27)

The historical evolution of Persian poetry was a slow process. Its forms and theme were established early on, and most of the subsequent improvisations and poetical innovations were conceived as adjustments and elaborations and not reconstruction or radical changes. It flourished through

refinement, nourishing and invigorating its poetic imagery by drawing on the sciences and philosophic and religious ideas current at the time. The major literary movements belonged to circles patronized by the royal courts. Even when the patronage of the poetry gradually became more diffused and it gained a wider audience among the people at large and religious classes, it still retained much of its earlier courtly traits. (28)

DIFFERENT FORMS OF PERSIAN POETRY

Right from the early development of Persian poetry, different poetic forms had come into play. All have a harmonious cadence. The main forms are briefly discussed here.

LYRICAL PERSIAN POETRY

A Persian poem can be regarded as an *objet d'art* in itself: crafted to please the eye as well as the ear.

The *Qasida* (panegyric ode) and *Ghazal* (lyric) take pride of place in Persian lyrical texts. They contain laudatory accounts of rulers and patrons, on the one hand, and on the other courtly love songs and mystical lyrics: in essence two different registers of long songs. The panegyric may include advice, and concern with morality and politics; it may be about nature, festivals, and historical events. The love songs were either for worldly love, or for mystical love, and belong to richer codified literary genres. (29) Apart from these two forms of writings there are quatrains (*Ruba'is*) which are found in the oldest texts and have come down to us. Forms of lyrical poetry are discussed here.

THE QASIDA:

The aim of the poet of a *qasida* was to sing paeon of praises of an individual and often, in return, to reap a reward. In this the poet draws on and enhances the patron's historical reputation. There are normally three parts in a *qasida*: first, or the *nasib*, evokes the occasion for the poem – a festival, a victory, or even some historical event; the second, or the central section, is an ode to a prince or some other figure of secular or religious eminence in which there are allusions, biographical and political; and in the third, the poet usually alludes to the merits of his poem, sometimes, hinting at the fitting reward for his poetic product.

Originally, the *qasida* was an Arabic form which had developed fully into a marvellous instrument for expressing the boasts and prides, the loves and hates, the life and death of the Arab; soon the Iranians took over the form, when Iranian rulers appeared on the scene, and poets began to write *qasidas* in Persian.

The *qasida*, in a fully fledged Persian form, appeared in the 9th century in the extant works of Rudaki, who composed these poems for his Samanid rulers. These were followed by the circles of poets at the courts of the Ghaznavids and Seljuqs. The poems of two celebrated panegyrists dominated the 12th century and were regarded as the apogee of the form: they were panegyrists of Sultan Sanjar (1084-1157) -Anwari (d.1200), and Khaqani from Shirvan (d.1199) in the Caucasus. Both of them were the towering figures in this genre of poetry. (30)

Later on, with the Sufi Sanai the *qasida* was used as the vehicle for a message.

THE GHAZAL:

In Arabic, the word "*ghazal*" designates the love song of a male lover addressed to a woman. The word "*taghazzal*", from the same root, refers to the description of the sorrows of love, and the *ghazal* is thus essentially the elegiac plaint of the poet – lover. In its form, the *ghazal* is similar to the *qasida*, but in content it confines itself to "*taghazzal*", as defined above.

Another distinction between the *ghazal* and *qasida* is that in a *qasida*, the poet cites the name of his patron between the first and the second section of the poem, while in a *ghazal*, the poet's own name, or pen-name, appears at the end. This is the fundamental difference.

The *ghazal* is usually a personal poem where the poet is cast tragically in the role of lover – a pathetic figure, far from his sweetheart, he broods endlessly on all the facets of his hapless love.

As love lyric, the *ghazal*, often, exploits the ambiguities born out of distinction between sacred and profane love. Similarly, in the case of mystical *ghazal*, the art of suggestion is often the key to the success of the poem. Quite early the *ghazal* was adopted by mystics as a medium for the expression of love for the divine and this form lent itself ideally to the purpose of the Sufis. "The imagery of a *ghazal* lent itself easily to allegorization or at least to a type of ambiguity that point toward both secular and transcendental referends." (31) The introduction of mystic symbolism so profoundly affected the *ghazal* that it became impossible for even a conventional *ghazal* to be written without it.

The thirteenth century marks the ascendancy of lyric poetry with the consequent development of the *ghazal* into a major verse form as well as rise of mystical and Sufi poetry. This style is called "Araqi Style", as western provinces of Iran were called Araq-i-Ajam or Persian Iraq, and is known for its emotional lyric quality, rich metres and the relative simplicity of its language.

The *ghazal* flourished during the time of Rumi (1207-1273) and Sa'di (d. c 1292). Both were indebted to Fariduddin Attar (1145-1220) of Nishapur and Sanai of Ghazna (d.c 1135). Both Sanai and Attar used the form mystically so set the fashion followed by many. In the 14th century the *ghazal* reached its culmination under Hafiz Shirazi (c 1317 – 1390), who not only used this form of poetry almost as the sole medium for the manifestation of his poetic genius, but also surpassed all the other poets of this genre, and till today remains unsurpassed.

THE RUBA'I:

The quatrain, or the *ruba'i*, was already a very popular form of verse in Persian at the time of Rudaki. Over the last ten centuries, most of the Persian poets tried their hand at composing quatrains. Its very brevity provided the ideal venue for a memorable and pithy statement and explains its wide popularity. This has suited the poets for epigrams.

Another distinguishing point in a *ruba'i* is that it is a purely Persian poetic genre and not a borrowing from Arabic. It was adopted and used in other countries such as India, Turkey and Central Asia under Persian influence.

Edward FitzGerald's translation of some of the *rubaiyyat* of Omar Khayyam in 1859 has made this genre of Persian poetry a household name which has been copied in many other languages.

THE QATTA:

The *qatta* is a shorter form of poem which is often used for satire and topical form of poetry in mystical verse. This is also frequently inserted in prose texts to highlight special points in a discursive or a narrative context.

The *qatta* is somewhat underrated Persian poetic form and is often used by way of being moral informal than the other forms of poem and is also used for didactic purposes.

THE MARSIYA

The term *marsiya* (elegy) is a derivative of the Arabic word *risa*, meaning a great tragedy for a departed soul. It was a well defined literary form in Arabic literature which was standardized in Persian by Ferdowsi in the *Shah-nameh*. When the poet was sixty-seven, his thirty-seven years old son died and he wrote a *marsiya* which was inserted in the *Shah-nameh*.

The *marsiya* is a poem recited to express sorrow on the death of a person; it is also a poem to commemorate a pathetic event. In Persian, gradually and especially after the Safawids declared Twelver Shiaism as the state religion in Iran in the sixteenth century, *marsiya* came to relate the event of martyrdom of Imam Husain, the grandson of the Prophet, and his kinsmen at Karbala. Sometimes it is also written on the death of relatives and friends.

THE MESNAVI

The *mēsnavi* is a poetic collection of rambling anecdotes and stories usually derived from the holy scriptures, historical events and everyday tales. Stories are narrated to illustrate a point and each moral is discussed in detail.

The *mesnavi* is usually a long poem in rhyming hemistichs. It is an Iranian form; the *Yashts*, or hymns of the *Avesta*, of the pre-Islamic period in Iran, are somewhat similar in form. As early as Rudaki we have traces of *mesnavi* poems. Ferdowsi used this form for the *Shah-nameh*. Among other early poets of Persian Unsuri and Asadi composed verses in this form which, in turn, served as the inspiration for the romantic *mesnavis* of Nizami Ganjavi.

The Sufi poets from Sanai onwards made liberal use of *mesnavi* form which reached its culmination in Rumi's *Mesnavi-i-Ma'anavi* in the thirteenth century.

THE PERSIAN EPIC

This genre of poetry honours heroic figures of Iran and is a complex literary phenomenon. Using myths as its base, this epic form mixes history with legend. Its usual form is a long narrative poem. One monumental work has dominated the entire genre and that is Ferdowsi's *Shah-nameh*, or the Book of Kings. Charles-Henri De Fouchecour says, "It constitutes a kind of Book of Genesis. In time, royal deeds, dynastic chronicles, romances and various legends of past ages began to feature in these compositions. Such was the case for the great Parthian or Scythian families, or the famous *Alexander Romance*. Various didactic and scientific texts were also included, as a bond, welding the various materials together." (32)

Many texts of epics appeared in this genre in the pre-Islamic era which were translated under the Abbasids. The first compilation in this genre appeared in Persian prose which was completed in 957 by four scholars under the direction of Abu Mansur, the governor of Tus. Some of the Persian poets also set off to work even before Ferdowsi. The most famous is by Daqiqi (c 942 – c 981) who just started compiling it but left it unfinished due to his untimely death when Ferdowsi started writing his *Shah-nameh* in which he preserved Daqiqi's poem. About Ferdowsi's composition, Charles-Henri de Fouchecour says:

"Throughout his narrative, Ferdowsi pursues a fecund thematic idea characteristic of the epic tradition that portrays the vulnerable yet heroic man confronting his relentless destiny. Salvation lies in wisdom, for it, above all else, makes man aware of the dehumanizing cycle of Time-Destiny." (33)

Ferdowsi's *magnum opus* has exercised enormous influence on Iranian cultural history over the years. This work has served as a literary mould. Inspired by Ferdowsi, many rulers in the subsequent generations, commissioned court-poets to write eulogistic poems to celebrate their reigns and achievements which became pieces of literature besides source materials for later historians.

EARLY PERSIAN POETS

EPIC POETS

At the fountainhead of Persian poetry stands the figure of Rudaki (860-940) as an archpoet. The extant works of Rudaki at the court of Samanids in Bukhara contain the first masterpieces of Neo-Persian poetry. (34) By its exemplary quality, this poetry served as a model for subsequent generations of poets of Persian. The established rules and techniques of the classical poetry appear in the works of Rudaki. His reputation as a court-poet and as an accomplished musician and singer has survived, although little of his poetry has been preserved. Among his lost works from Arabic is a versified translation of fables of *Kalilah wa Damanah*, Arabic translation of Ibn Muqaffa of the *Panchatantra*, the inexhaustible mine of wisdom from India. (35)

Rudaki is generally known as the "Chaucer of Persia". He was congenitally blind but, owing to his mastery in the presentation of the various erotic, romantic and eulogistic sentiments, he was able to influence greatly the subsequent Persian poetry. (36)

Poetess Rabia Balkhi, who, according to some scholars, lived at a time of Rudaki, is known to be the first poetess of Neo-Persian. She is known to have written love poems in which sincerity of feelings appeals direct to the heart and are rich in metaphors and similes. (37)

In the 10th century, at the instance of Abu Mansur, governor of Tus, many attempts were made to produce a Persian version of the epic tradition. Daqiqi (c 942 – c 981) made one such attempt. He began a poetic version and when only a few verses were written by him, his life was cut-short. The available

verses survived as Ferdowsi had incorporated them in his *Shah-Nameh*.

Daqiqi was followed by Ferdowsi (940-1020), the greatest epic poet of Iran, whose *Shah-Nameh* has become the national epic of Iran and Persian-speaking world. (Further details are discussed in the Chapter on Ferdowsi in this book.)

PANEGYRIC AND ROMANTIC POETS

The period when rulers of Iranian origin were in power was only a short interlude before the arrival of Turkish tribes from Central Asia. At first the Turks were military slaves to the Muslims, but soon they established their own dynasties. The first were the Ghaznavids, shortly followed by the Seljuq Qarakhanids of Central Asia, whose massive invasion in the middle of the 11th century changed the scenario in the Islamic Middle East. For centuries the Turks remained the dominant political force in Iran, Anatoliya and India. They underwent a process of Islamization that was profoundly influenced by Iranian civilization. They extended their patronage to Persian poetry, which was considered to be most valuable attribute for building up the prestige of kingship in the Iranian style.

It is noteworthy that whatever subsequent literary activity took place in Persian literature, it was mainly under the patronage of non-Iranians, who were vanquished by the superior Iranian culture and who had adopted Iranian manners, etiquettes and even the language. (38)

In the first decade of the 11th century, Ghazni, capital of Mahmud Ghaznavi (998-1030), was the most important centre of Persian literature. Mahmud assembled a circle of scholars, philosophers, and poets around his throne. The leading poet was Unsuri, poet-laureate. Unsuri's *qasidas* were greatly appreciated for their rhetorical virtuosity. He also wrote a number of romantic poems in *mesnavi* form, which are now lost. Ghaznavid poets glorified in their panegyrics the raids of the Sultan into the Indian subcontinent. These campaigns resulted in a permanent conquest of the Punjab where Lahore became the residence of a Ghaznavid prince, or viceroy of Hindustan. In the 2nd half of the century, Lahore became a great

centre of Persian language where the major poet was Masud Sa'd Salman (1048-1121), who wrote *qasidas* and is also known for introducing new genres of *habsiyat* (prison-poems) and *bara-masa*, a genre of poetry found in medieval poetry all over northern India. (39)

Among the most significant panegyrists of the 11th century, apart from Unsuri, were: Farukhi of Seistan, Manuchehri of Damghan (d.1040) and Muizzi of Nishapur (d. before 1127). In the 11th century, we can also include Omar Khayyam (1044-1123) of Nishapur, whose fame rests on the authorship of a number of *rubai'is*. Khayyam's bold spirit of enquiry and his questioning of accepted wisdom had a mixed and often hostile early reception in Iran. (A separate chapter on Omar Khayyam appears in this book).

Among the panegyrists of the 12th century, we can mention the name of Anwari (d. c 1200), who occupies a secure place in the composition of eulogistic verse, or court poetry (40). He was a talented poet but wasted his ingenuity by composing verses of flattery, exaggeration and conceit to please his patrons at the cost of truth, realism and sincerity. His contemporary Khaqani (1120-1190) of Shirvan is known for having written a *na'at* in praise of Prophet Muhammad which is a class by itself, besides a *Diwan*.

Another famous poet of the 12th century was Nizami Ganjavi (1141-1209). "He was a scholarly and saintly person, and his poetry is known for its mature thoughts, deep meditation and lofty imaginative flights." (41) He composed *Khamasa* or *Panj Ganj*, or five narrative poems, which set the trend in the exposition of the heroic and amatory sentiments and which Persian poets in the subsequent times felt proud to emulate. (42) (A separate Chapter about him appears in this book).

We can also include the name of poetess Mahasati Ganjavi (c 1089 – c 1159), who is known for possessing a rare gift of ready wit, spontaneity, ability to extemporize verse which made her celebrated at the court of Sultan Sanjar Seljuq. She employed *rubai'is* as the vehicle of her poetic expression. (43)

SUFI AND DIDACTIC POETS

From the 11th century, Iran was subjected to great upheavals; there was turbulence in their moral life and social stability. First it was from the direction of Turks whose large scale invasion affected them. Thereafter, in the middle of the 13th century, greater calamity befell them when Mongols invaded Iran and sacked Baghdad in 1258. Flourishing cities were raised to the ground; large-scale destruction, arson and murder of population followed. The Iranians suffered untold misery. In these turbulent conditions, besides confronting with existential problems, they were groping in the dark to seek peace, social stability and tranquility. Mysticism, or Sufism, which had developed simultaneously with Neo-Persian in Iran, now provided a kind of balm to their troubled souls. Poetic rendition of Sufistic ideology was responsible for bringing an admirable serenity, patience, peace of mind and detachment from material things and stood them in good stead.

The 13th century is marked by the development of mystic, or Sufistic, poetry. In fact Hakim Sanai (d.c 1131) of Ghazni composed his monumental *Garden of Truth (Hadiqat al-Haqiqah)* in the form of a *mesnavi*. (44) He was followed by the next mystic poet Fariduddin Attar (1145-1220) whose *Mantiq al-Tayr* (Logic of Birds) is one of the great poems of Sufism. (45) (A separate Chapter about him appears in this book).

After this we come to the doyen of Sufi poets Maulana Rumi (1207-1273). His great work in Persian is known as *Mesnavi-i-Ma'anavi*, which occupies the topmost summit in the Sufistic poetry and is the foremost representative of didactic poetry in all Persian literature. (46) (A separate Chapter about him appears in this book).

Of all Persian poets and writers, the most famous and well-known is Sheikh Sa'di (d. 1292). "He was an extensive traveller and gathered a rich crop of knowledge during his thirty years of travels to different parts of the world." (47) From his wide travels and experience, he extracted the quintessence of wisdom which he presented in the form of epigrams and which are now a permanent asset to Persian literature. "He is considered to be the foremost representative of didactic poetry in Persian literature." (48) (A separate Chapter about him appears in the book.)

Persian language came to be firmly set up in India with the establishment of Delhi Sultanate in 1206. Persian became the official language of Delhi Sultans and the ruling elite, majority of whom were highly Persianized Turks from Central Asia. They extended Muslim rule in India, and with it Persian language and culture in most parts of the subcontinent.

Among the most famous Persian poets in India who produced their subtle innovations were: Amir Khusrow (1253-1325) known for his new didactic style and is hailed as the greatest poet of Medieval India; and Hasan Sijzi Dehlavi (1263-1337) who earned the epithet of "Sa'di of India" because of his sweet, monothematic lyrics. (49) (A separate Chapter about Amir Khusrow appears in the book.)

LYRIC POETS

The lyric poetry (*ghazals*) started with poets such as Sanai and Attar, who inspired Rumi, Khaqani, Anwari, Nizami and Sa'di – all of whom were highly respected *ghazal* writers. The elite of this school are Rumi, Sa'di and Hafiz. The 14th century is known for the culmination of lyric poetry in Iran. Shamsuddin Muhammad Hafiz Shirazi (d.1390) is acknowledged to be the greatest lyric poet of Persian. The inspiration, beauty, and sweetness of Persian lyrical poetry attained its highest summit in Hafiz and "in the rose garden of Persian literature there is no nightingale more melodious than Hafiz." (50)

In the 15th century, we have Jami (1414-1492), a versatile mystic, scholar, poet, and composer of idylls and lyrics. (Separate Chapters for both Hafiz and Jami appear in the book.)

With the establishment of Safawid rule in Iran in 1501, non-Shia and Sufi poets found themselves debarred from the royal favour, which proved detrimental to the progress of Persian poetry. As a consequence of this, many well-known Persian poets looked for greener pastures, and a number of them emigrated to India and sought shelter at the Mughal court and were provided liberal patronage. Among them were Ghazali Mashadi (d.1572), Urfi (1555-1592), Naziri Nishapuri (d.1618), Talib Amuli (d.1626), Qudsi (d.1656), Abu Talib Kalim (d.1650), and a host of others. (51) It can be said, that the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries became the 'Augustan Age' of Persian literature in India. It gave rise to many indigenous poets of Persian such as Faizi (1547-1595), Nasir Ali Sirhindi (1630-1697) and Bedil Dehlavi (1644-1721). (52) (Separate Chapter about Bedil appears in the book).

The last Iranian poet of Persian whose poetic compositions were in the classical mould was Qa'ani Shirazi (1808-1854).

Qa'ani belonged to the neo-classical *Bazgasht-i-Adabi* period and displayed the traditional glamorous artistry. (Separate Chapter about Qa'ani appears in the book.)

MYSTICISM IN PERSIAN POETRY

The role of mysticism in Persian poetry is intricately bound to the Sufic poetry in Persian – Sufism being the inner, mystical dimension of Islam. As earlier stated, mysticism in Iran developed almost simultaneously with the development of Neo-Persian from the Middle Persian.

In Persian poetry, there are two types of mystical writings:

- a) Those that explore mystical themes and ideology, and
- b) Those writings which are favoured by the Sufis.

In the first category are those poets who were inspired by their own mystical experiences, or mystical themes, or mystical teachings of their mentors, which they incorporated into their poetical compositions. Among such poets we can mention the names of Sanai of Ghazni, Attar of Nishapur, and Maulana Rumi, and, in the fifteenth century, Jami.

In the second category are these poets who composed their poetry which was favoured by the Sufis, such as *Zohdiya* (ascetic poetry), poetry praising the Prophet, or Sufi saints, and that poetry which was highly didactic in nature, which cannot be described as mystical. Poets Sa'di and Hafiz, who were not Sufis, belong to this category, greatly favoured by the Sufis who also interpreted their poetry as Sufic which the following generations accepted.

Another reason why mysticism became all-pervasive in the classical Persian poetry is that, from early times, the mystics or Sufis realized that they could "express the ineffable" in poetry much better than in prose so the Sufi poets invented technical terminology and vocabulary for manifesting their love-devotion and without a proper knowledge of the symbolism used by them

their poems are likely to appear materialistic. "Usurping the whole of the poetic vocabulary that had been developed by that time, they imbued every word with mystical significance, such as *abroo* (eye-brow) – God's attributes which conceal His Essence, *but* (idol) – every object of worship other than God, *Chashm* (eye) – God's beholding the aptitude of his servants, *haya* (shame) shame of being found wanting in sincerity, *khal* (mole) – the point of Real Unity which is concealed and is represented as black, *lab* (lip) – the life-giving property of God and His keeping man in existence, *rukhs* (face, cheek) – the revelation of Divine Beauty in attributes or grace, *sabr* (patience) – fortitude, *saqi* (wine-bearer) – Reality to manifest in every form, *Zulf* (tress) – the revelation of Divine Majesty in attributes of Omnipotence, and many words." (53) (Glossary of these terms is given in the Appendix to this book).

As a result, every word of the vocabulary has acquired such mystiques, or "clouds", of associated meaning from lyricism and mysticism that the two strains merged into one. No doubt some poets wrote poetry that is evidently and unmistakably mystical and Sufic, as stated above, it is rather difficult to identify poetry in classical Persian that is not mystical. This situation was fully exploited by the Sufis to their advantage and classical poetry came to be identified with mysticism.

It was classical Persian poetry which, no doubt, dedicated itself to Sufism in the broadest and deepest sense. It would not be wrong to say that the flowing of Islamic mystical thought took place in Persian poetry. So much so that it prompted Iranian scholars such as, Zarinkub to say "The Persian poetry of classical times was so extensively influenced by Sufi philosophy that almost every great lyric poet was a Sufi, as every great Sufi of the time was a poet." (54) In the same line Q. Ghani says "Sufism gave (Persian) poetry a new and important lease on life

broadening its conceptual scope and imaginative power.....”
(55)

Much the same has been asserted by Western scholars – Rypka says, “There are but few (Persian) poets who remain untouched by Sufism in one form or another.” (56)

DIDACTICISM IN CLASSICAL PERSIAN POETRY

Didactic poetry is a kind of poetry which defends the humanistic values – heavenly or conventional – with its tendency towards positive ideology and reliance on collective individualism for the sake of human being for its philosophical, moral or religious meaning. Based on this obligation, classical Persian poetry, with pervasive mysticism, became highly didactic. It aimed at teaching philosophy and ethics and to explain and specify religious, educational, philosophical and ethical instructive issues and thoughts.

Didacticism started in Pahlavi, or Middle Persian, under the Sassanians to express philosophical and ethical doctrines which gradually manifested when Neo-Persian developed in the post-Islamic period. One of the earliest examples of didacticism in Persian poetry is in Ferdowsi's *Shah-Nameh*. It was soon followed in the composition of Sufis and other poets who used poetry as the vehicle to instruct. Anecdotes were collected and incorporated in their poetic compositions from a didactic perspective.

Omar Khayyam's poetry belongs to the mystical and didactic genres that were subsequently developed by Sanai in his *Hadiqat al-Haqiqah* (The Garden of Truth), and that found further development in Nizami's, *Makhzan-al Asrar* and in long *mesnavis* of Attar, and reached culmination in the work of Jalaluddin Rumi's *Mesnavi-i-Ma'anavi*. Sa'di, Amir Khusrow, and Hafiz used their *ghazals* (lyrics) as the medium for instructive contents. Sa'di and Amir Khusrow chose a detailed approach for expressing ethical and moral content, whereas Hafiz chose brief approach for the same purpose – the words of the former are explicit and clear, and of the latter mysterious and often satirical.

After the fifteenth century, "Indian Style" of Persian poetry, or *Sabq-i-Hindi*, took over. This style has its roots in Taimurid era and produced the likes of Amir Khusrow, Urfi, Nasir Ali Sirhindi, Bedil Dehlavi, and others who composed excellent didactic poetry.

Relatively few Persian poems miss an opportunity to teach. Some poems are specially designed for it, whereas others are not so explicit but convey their didactic message implicitly through the medium of the narrative. The art of rhetoric in classical Persian poetry is the art of persuasion which has enchanted many generations and has made them receptive to the didactic messages embedded in them. Poetry of Hafiz, who was not a Sufi, can be read from this perspective.

METAPHORS AND SYMBOLS IN PERSIAN POETRY

Metaphors and symbols are at the heart of the classical Persian poetry. They are used for a wide range of purposes in different genres. Broadly speaking, we are surrounded by symbols in almost every area of our life. Every field of study has made use of symbols and provided a definition for it. They are used to express the concepts which cannot be expressed through the ordinary language. Persian poetry is no exception to this rule and symbols have been most frequently and effectively used by the poets in their compositions.

Classical Persian poetry is essentially symbolic. This is reflected in the abundant use of rhetorical figures, and also in the prominent place which poetry occupies in Persian culture. Ehsan Yarshater observes: "Poetry is the most significant artistic achievement of Persia, and, as an art with wide scope, sustained energy and universal appeal, provides the broadest stage for artistic and intellectual expression." (57)

Metaphors and symbols are indispensable for descriptive poetry, in which poets strive to make original metaphors for a courtly object such as a pen or a sword or for an abstract concept such as good name or magnanimity. Among the early poets Nizami Ganjavi and Khaqani of Shirvan contrived many metaphors. "In turn, Persian poetry became permeated with metaphors and novel imagery. The growing virtuosity related to a stylistic development in Persian poetry." (58) The twelfth century is seen as the epoch of "a continuous refinement of the language of metaphors." (59)

There are three basic colours: white, black and red which have always played a symbolic role in Persian poetry. White represents good, pure, radiant; and is related to goodness and nobility, the power of love, and transformation through love.

Black represents evil, dark, and dangerous; and is connected with the black looks and the faces of the sinners and the *nafs*, the lower self, which is often seen as black. Sufi imagery is permeated with the experience of these colours. Red usually carries all the power of blood and energy. It is connected with activity and strength, but also with wrath. A Sufi who radiates power is called *Surkh-posh*, or red-mantled. Red is the colour of martyrs; and also the colour of the beloved, whereas lover is always pale and yellow. Colours became quite symbolic and that to change colour also came to mean to change one's character.

In the cultivation of geometrical gardens, in which the rose has often held pride of place, has a long history in Iran. In the *ghazal* (lyric), it is the beauty of the rose which provokes the longing song of the nightingale. As a result, the imagery of lover and beloved became a type of the Sufi's quest for divine love. Even Sufi theoretician Ibn Arabi aligns the rose with the beloved's blushing cheek, on the one hand, and with the divine names and attributes, on the other. (60) Similarly, *bagh*, or garden, as a poetic image in classical Persian poetry, stands for order and beauty and the link between man and nature. However, under the influence of mystical thought, *bagh* becomes a symbol of Paradise. *Bagh*, as conventionalized in literature, summarises the Iranian attitude towards nature.

Some of the other popular metaphors and symbols are : the stereotypes of lover and beloved – miserable, suffering, unrequited lover, and aloof, unconcerned and inapproachable beloved – the conventional metaphors that typify these relationships, are *parwana-o-shama* – the moth and the candle, *balbul-o-gul* – nightingale and the rose, Majnun and Laila, and so on so forth. A beloved started with someone tangible like a

woman, then it became a friend, a teacher/master, and then it transcended to God. All these are immutably fixed in tradition. (61)

“The metaphorical language of classical Persian poetry also developed within cumulative tradition. What began initially as a simile – lips as red as rubies, for instance, became so common place and hackneyed after thousands of repetitions over the years and centuries that in the end the simile was scrapped and ruby lips became simply rubies. So also tears that initially rolled down the cheek like pearls became, in the end, simply pearls, while tears, that glistened like stars, became stars. A face as round and lovely as the moon similarly became simply the moon.” (62)

While classical Persian poetry works within well defined literary standards and conventions, poets tried to contrive new but acceptable metaphors. Metaphors were also at the basis of Persian Sufic love poetry, in which mundane earthly metaphors reached transcendent attributes – just for example how wine metaphors are interwoven in mystic love poetry. In the lyric poetry of Rumi, Sa'di, Amir Khusrow and Hafiz, you can hardly find a *ghazal* that does not contain the wine, the bard and the beloved. In the didactic and mystical poetry, the same theme of Love runs throughout. Love, according to the Sufis, is the regenerating spirit of the Universe and antidote to all human perplexities and vices. Love brings forth beautiful things and thoughts into this world – it plays a vital role in the spiritual and moral uplift of man.

The word *saqi*, or “cup-bearer”, is one of the key words in Sufi terminology and also in classical Persian literature. Many scholars, such as Hossein Elahi Ghomshei in his writings, see *saqi*, as the counterpart of the muse in the Western culture which

fulfills exactly the same service as the muse to inspire the poet, to illuminate what is dark, and to raise what is low, that the poet may assert the eternal providence and justify the ways of God to man.

In short, metaphors and symbols have played a singular role in classical Persian poetry and in providing it with wide scope for artistic and intellectual expression.

ANALYSIS OF CLASSICAL PERSIAN POETRY

It is in her classical poetry, as in her classical art, the soul of Iran lives. The Iranians are so devoted lovers of poetry, from the educated to the lay man, that they freely use verses in their conversation which gives credence to the belief that whole of Iran is poetry incarnate. So strong is the Iranian aptitude for versifying everyday expressions that one can encounter poetry in almost every classical work, whether of Persian literature, science, metaphysics or history. "The culture of an Iranian is measured by the appropriateness of his poetic quotations during his conversation." (63) Scholars observe there can hardly be a race in the world on whose lips poetry wells up so naturally and spontaneously as on the lips of Iranians. (64)

The effect of classical Persian poetry is cooling and refreshing. Its greatest merit lies in the beauty of its words, the softness of its cadences, the charm of its expression. The language itself is musical and the recitation of classical Persian poetry creates melodious vibrations which long resound in mind. The emphasis is more on the art of expression than the thought. A classical Persian poet is more keen to appeal to and awaken the feelings rather than the intellect. The reader of Persian poetry, in consequence, is apt to become more sentimental – lulling the intellect in a pleasant dream and setting the emotions aflame. Perhaps, it is for this reason that Iranians are known to be highly emotional.

The favourite themes of classical Persian poetry are: Love, mundane or divine, separation from the beloved, the cruelty of fate, the destruction caused by war, the evanescence of life, and the ecstatic transports of wine. In the presentation of these ideas the unchallengeable excellence of classical Persian poetry has got to be admitted. However, by a constant reference to

such thoughts – “that human life is transient, that death crouches in ambush for its victim, that joy only comes to pass away and that destiny is inexorable in its decrees” (65) – pessimism was bound to crawl in and infest it with wistful autumnal charm.

The true greatness and charm of classical Persian poetry, undoubtedly, is to be seen in Sufic poetry. For centuries Sufism has had a mighty hold over Persian poetry exclusively with a view to expressing Sufistic ideas and that too in Sufic symbolical terminology. Those poets who were actually Sufis could write with genuine enthusiasm their laudable compositions, but those poets who were not Sufis and composed their excellent poems, in deference to the prevailing convention, their poetry also came to be interpreted as Sufic and, we can say, was usurped and declared as Sufic by the admirers of Sufism. In Persian Sufic as well as non-Sufic poetry, there has been an excessive mention of intoxication by the joys of wine and the raptures of love. In the Sufic terminology the wine and the love symbolize the devotion for the Infinite.

When all is said and done, the height which Persian classical poetry accomplished in reaching perfection is seldom found in any other literature of the world, and this has been achieved by several factors such as, the natural sweetness of the language, the delightful and elevating theme of erotic devotion and the poetic genius of the writers – all of them cooperated to make classical Persian poetry unparalleled.

I conclude by an observation made by Maulana Shibli Numani (1857-1914) in his famous Urdu work, *She'r ul-Ajam*, that the Iranians are poets by temperament: Islam accentuated this natural tendency which reached such a height that if all the poetry in the world were to be balanced with classical Persian poetry alone, both scales would weigh equal. This may or may

not be an exaggeration, but this shows the power and bewitchment of classical Persian poetry which has fascinated the generations that followed.

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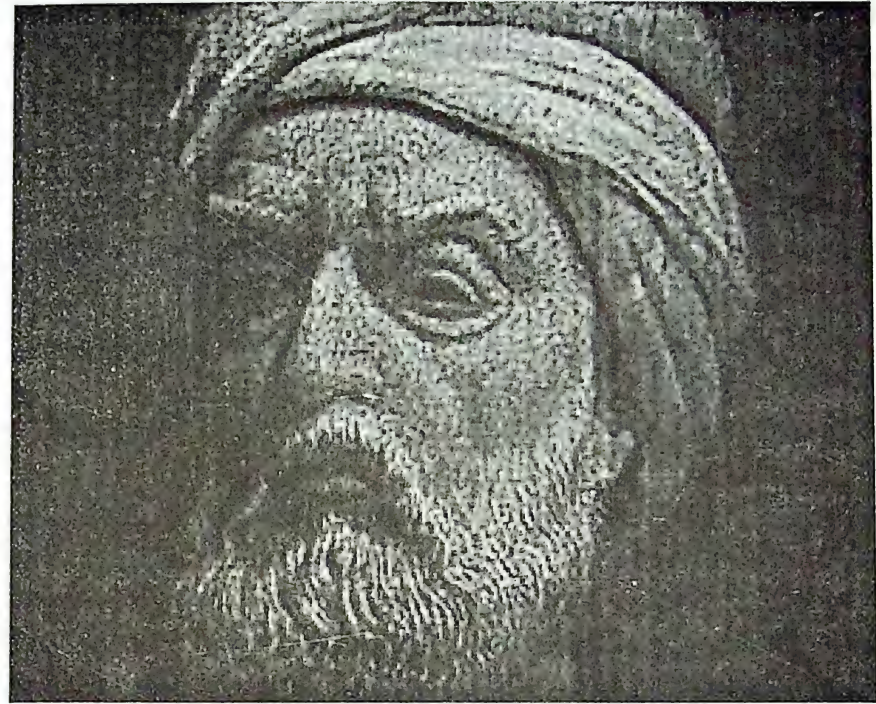
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FERDOWSI

**HAKIM ABUL QASIM FERDOWSI TUSI (940-1020):
THE COMPOSER OF THE SHAH-NAMEH –
THE NATIONAL EPIC OF IRAN**

ABSTRACT

Hakim Abul Qasim, popularly known by his *takhallus* Ferdowsi, is a highly revered Persian poet. He is the author of the *Shah-nameh*, the national epic of Iran and the Persian-speaking world.

The *Shah-nameh* was originally composed by Ferdowsi for the princes of the Samanid dynasty, which ruled in Greater Khurasan from 819 to 999. The Samanids, originally belonged to Zoroastrian theocratic nobility, of Iranian *dehqan* (1) – aristocratic landowners – origin, whose founder Saman Khuda (2) had converted to Islam under the influence of Asad Ibn-Abdullah al-Qasri, the governor of Khurasan. The Samanids were greatly responsible for a revival of Neo – Persian and Iranian cultural traditions after the Arab conquest of Iran in the middle of the seventh century. With their roots stemming from the city of Balkh, the Samanids promoted Iranian arts and science and Persian literature and thus attracted scholars and poets such as Rudaki, Bal'ami, Daqiqi, Ferdowsi, and Avicenna. (3) Under Samanids, Bukhara was a rival to Baghdad in its glory. (4) After the fall of Samanids in 999, Ferdowsi, dedicated his work to Mahmud of Ghazna, who was of Turkish descent but a great patron of Persian arts and literature.

The *Shah-nameh* chronicles the legendary history of pre-Islamic kings of Iran from Keyumars to Yazdgerd III. Ferdowsi spent almost three decades – from 977 to 1010 – to complete his great heroic epic poem which became one of the most influential works of Persian literature.

BRIEF LIFE-SKETCH

Very little information we have about the poet's early life which has given rise to many legends surrounding his childhood and early life. Most of these legends, which developed in the latter part of the fifteenth century, in my opinion, can be ignored. However some credence can be given to the earlier accounts, which have come down to us, and are as follows –

- i) Nizami Aruzi Samarqandi's (1105/1110-1161) *Chahar Maqala* (Four Discourses) , and
- ii) Zahiruddin Nasr Mukhammad Awfi's *Lubab al-Albab* (The Quintessence of the Hearts) a *tazkira* of Persian poets written in 1221 at Uch in the Punjab under Nasiruddin Qabacha (ruled 1206-1227).

Nizami Aruzi Samarqandi's account of Ferdowsi is the most ancient and important of our extraneous sources of information. He wrote it just about a century after Ferdowsi's death. Nizami Aruzi visited Tus, the famous city of Khurasan, at present known as Mashhad, in 1118 and again in 1120-21. On both these occasions, he visited the tomb of Ferdowsi to pay his respects to the memory of the great epic-poet of Persian. He has also mentioned in *Chahar Maqala* that when he was in Nishapur in about 1120-21, he met Amir Muizzi, the celebrated poet-laureate of Sultan Sanjar Seljuq, who informed him –

“.....that he had heard the Amir Abdur – Razzaq of Tus relate as follows: ‘Mahmud was once in India, returning thence towards Ghazna. It chanced that on his way a rebellious chief possessed of a strong fortress, and next day Mahmud encamped at its gates, and dispatched an ambassador to him, bidding him come before him on the morrow to do homage and

pay his respects at the Court when he should receive a robe of honour and return to his place. Next day Mahmud rode out with the Prime Minister on his right hand, for the ambassador had turned back and was coming to meet the king. "I wonder", said the latter to the Minister, "what reply he will have given?" "The Minister answered:

"And should the reply with my wish not accord,

Then Afrasiyab's field, and the mace, and the sword!"

"Whose verse," inquired Mahmud, 'is that? For he must have the heart of a man' 'Poor Abul-Qasim Ferdowsi composed it', answered the Minister; 'he who for five-and-twenty years labored to complete such a work, and reaped from it no advantage'. 'You speak well', said Mahmud; 'I deeply regret that this noble man was disappointed by me. Remind me at Ghazna to send him something.'

"So when the Sultan returned to Ghazna, the Minister reminded him; and Mahmud ordered that sixty thousand *dinars*' worth of indigo should be given to Ferdowsi....." (5) Nizami continues to write that when the gift of Sultan Mahmud reached Tus, the bard was dead and his high-spirited daughter, to whom the gift was given, refused to accept it, declaring that she needed it not." (6)

Such is the oldest account we possess about Ferdowsi. It may or may not be correct, but it represents what was known and believed by people a century after his death.

The second account given to us is by Zahiruddin Nasr Muhammad Awfi's work *Lubab al-Albab*, compiled in 1221

at Uch in the Punjab. "The *Lubab*, as usual, gives us little beyond extravagant praises, save that its author insists very strongly on the wonderful uniformity of style, diction, and sentiment maintained throughout so vast a work on which the poet was engaged for so many years....." (7) We gather from this work that how the *Shah-nameh* grew in popular favour in a very short time after its publication.

It may be mentioned here that another very short account of Ferdowsi is given in *Tarikh-i-Guzida* (Select History) compiled by Hamdullah Mustawfi Qazwini in 1330, different names of Ferdowsi are given and that he died in 1025-26. All other accounts and legends were developed subsequently.

Dawlatshah, in his *Tezkirat al-Sho'ara*, has also written an account of Ferdowsi but that is primarily based on *Chahar Maqala* of Nizami Aruzi Samarqandi to which he has referred as a source but has also "embroidered with many additional and probably fictitious details." (8) Therefore, it does not merit much attention.

Scholars generally concur that Ferdowsi was born into the family of Iranian aristocrat *dehqans* (land-owners) in 940 in the village of Paj, Arabicized Faj, near the city of Tus, in Khurasan. Little is known of his early life except that he had a wife, also coming from a family of *dehqans* and perhaps literate. Ferdowsi had a son, who died when thirtyseven, and was mourned by the poet in an elegy which the poet inserted in the *Shah-nameh*. (9) He was a Shi'ite Muslim and is confirmed by the early accounts of Nizami Aruzi and Nasiruddin Qazwini. Recently, some researchers have cast doubt on his religious beliefs. (10)

Dehqans were the land-owners who flourished under the Sassanians in Iran and were intensely patriotic and were always

keen to preserve the cultural traditions of Iran, especially the legendary tales about its kings. (11)

The Muslim conquest of Iran in the middle of the seventh century had been a watershed in the history of Iran bringing the new religion of Islam and foisting Arabic on the Iranians and promoting Arabic traditions and culture. By the late ninth century, with the decline of Abbasid Caliphate, local dynasties of Iranians emerged as virtual rulers in Khurasan. (12)

Ferdowsi grew up in Tus under the Samanids (819-999) who claimed descent from the Sassanian general Bahram Chobin. (13) The Samanids, like the Saffarids before them, were the first to reintroduce Persian in their official communications replacing Arabic. Since they had a great interest in pre-Islamic traditions, and they were originally Zoroastrian theocratic nobility and got converted to Islam, they commissioned translations of Pahlavi texts into Neo-Persian. Abu Mansur Abdul Razzaq, a *dehqan* and governor of Tus, had local scholars to compile *Shah-nameh* in prose which was completed in 957, (14) and is now lost. Later, Ferdowsi seems to have used this prose version as one of the sources of his great epic. It was in the Samanid court that poets such as Rudaki (858-c 941), considered to be the father of Neo-Persian poetry, and Daqiqi (940 ? – 980), another great poet of Persian, flourished. Ferdowsi followed in their footsteps. (15)

We have little information about *Ferdowsi* until he began writing the *Shah-nameh*. Since we do not know about the early education of Ferdowsi, we cannot say with certainty whether he knew Arabic and Pahlavi. As Neo-Persian, which emerged in the ninth century, was permeated by Arabic vocabulary, apart from that, we find fewer Arabic loan-words

in the *Shah-nameh*. We can only assume that this may have been a deliberate attempt by the poet. (16)

Ferdowsi, by his own account, began his work on the *Shah-nameh* in or about 976-77, intending it as a continuation of the work of Abu Mansur Daqiqi who was assassinated by his slave. Ferdowsi received generous patronage from the Samanid prince Ibn Mansur (976-997) and wrote the first version of the *Shah-nameh* in 994. (17)

When the Ghaznavid Turks overthrew the Samanids in 999, Ferdowsi continued his work on the *Shah-nameh*, in some places rewriting in order to praise the Ghaznavid Sultan Mahmud. Up to the age of about sixtythree in 1002, the poet seems to have passed his time in happier conditions, but from 1004 when he was about sixty-five he complained of poverty and weakness which he pointed out to the Vizier of Sultan Mahmud, "Ahmad Esfarayeni to intercede on his behalf so that some help may be forthcoming from Mahmud." (18) The year 1006, when the poet was sixty-seven, was the worst period of his life. In this year his thirty-seven years old son died and he wrote an elegy which was inserted in the *Shah-nameh*.

Finally, in his seventy-first year in 1010, Ferdowsi completed his *Shah-nameh*. Until then he did not receive any assistance whatsoever from Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi. After 1010 we do not know anything authentic about the remainder of his life except that he was living in penury and taken over by old age.

Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi's attitude to Ferdowsi has been a matter of much debate on which many legends have grown. We can surmise that Turkish Mahmud of Ghazna, though a great patron of Persian language, arts, and literary culture, might not have been keenly interested in tales from Iranian pre-Islamic

history than the Samamids, and therefore did not pay as much attention to it as it deserved. (19)

Ferdowsi died in 1020 and was buried in his own garden, burial in the cemetery of Tus having been forbidden by a local cleric. However, a Ghaznavid governor of Khurasan constructed a mausoleum over the grave and it became a revered site.

FERDOWSI'S WORKS

The *Shah-nameh* of Ferdowsi is the most popular and influential national epic in Iran and other Persian-speaking countries. It is the only surviving work by Ferdowsi and is regarded as indisputably genuine. He is also supposed to have written poems earlier in life but they no longer exist. A narrative poems, *Yusuf-o-Zulaikha*, was once attributed to him but scholarly consensus now rejects the idea that it is his. (20) There is also speculation about the genuineness of satire Ferdowsi allegedly wrote about Mahmud of Ghazna after the Sultan failed to reward him adequately. Nizami Aruzi Samarqandi claimed that all but six lines had been destroyed by a well-wisher who had paid Ferdowsi a thousand *dirhams* for the poem. Some scholars have viewed them as fabricated and reject it, others are more inclined to believe in their authenticity.

THE SHAH-NAMEH

The *Shah-nameh* is a long epic poem and is considered as the national epic of Iran and Persian speaking world. It consists of over fifty thousand verses. It tells mainly the mythical and to some extent the historical past of the Iranian empire from the creation of the world until Islamic conquest of Iran in the middle of the seventh century. This work is of great importance in Iranian culture. It is not only a literary master-piece, but also a definitive of ethno-national cultural identity of Iran, and, therefore, it is declared as the national epic of Iran and Persian – speaking countries. (21)

The *Shah-nameh* is also important to the followers of Zoroastrianism as in it are traces of the historical links between the beginnings of the religion with the death of the last Sassanian ruler of Iran after the Muslim conquest, and an end to the Zoroastrian influence in Iran.

The *Shah-nameh* is a monument of poetry of the first order encompassing myths and historiography which already existed in prose, an example being that of Abu Mansur Daqiqi, in Iran. The first to undertake versification of the chronicle was also Abu-Mansur Daqiqi, a senior contemporary of Ferdowsi, who came to a violent and tragic end when only about 1000 verses dealing with the rise of the prophet Zoroaster were completed, which, when Ferdowsi compiled his *Shah-nameh*, were incorporated in his *Shah-nameh* with acknowledgement. In composing the *Shah-nameh*, Ferdowsi also looked to many other Pahlavi sources.

Kaleghi-Motlagh says, "Throughout the entire *Shah-nameh*, a balance is masterfully maintained between words and meaning, on the one hand, and passion and thought, on the other. Ferdowsi's poetic genius in creating a lofty, dynamic epic

language that is brief but to the point and free from complexity greatly contributes to the strength of his style." (22)

From the account of the *Shah-nameh* it would appear that Ferdowsi was grieved by the fall of the Iranian Empire and its subsequent rule by the Arabs and Turks. In order to preserve the glorious memory of Iran's golden age and to transmit it to the new generation so that the new generation could learn and try to build a better world. (23) Though Ferdowsi himself was a Muslim, the *Shah-nameh* has a certain anti-Arab and anti-Turk bias. (24) The *Shah-nameh* can be divided into three parts, namely, 1) the mythical age, 2) the heroic age, and 3) the historical age.

THE MYTHICAL AGE :

In the period of mythical age which, incidentally, is the shortest part of the *Shah-nameh*, Ferdowsi begins with the praise of God and Wisdom and gives an account of the creation of the world and of man as believed by the Sassanians. The introduction is followed by the story of first man, Keyumars, who also became the first king after a period of mountain-dwelling. His grandson Hushang, accidentally, discovered fire and established the *Sadeh* feast in its honour. Then follow the stories of Tahmuras, Jamshed, Zahak, Kawa. or Kaveh, Fereydun and his three sons and his grandson Manuchehr. Altogether this portion consists of about 2100 verses and, in this portion of the *Shah-nameh*, Ferdowsi has narrated events with simplicity, predictability and swiftness of a historic work.

THE HEROIC AGE:

More than two-thirds of the *Shah-nameh* is devoted to the age of heroes – extending from Manuchehr's reign until the conquest of Iran by Alexander the Great. Again, the main feature of this

period is the major role played by the Sakas, according to Greek historians Scythians, heroes of Seistan (25), who appear to be the backbone of the Iranian Empire. Garshash is briefly mentioned with his son Nariman, whose son Sam acted as the leading paladin of Manuchehr while reigning in Seistan. His successors were his son Zal and Zal's son Rustam, the bravest of the brave, and then Faramarz.

Among the stories described in this section of the *Shah-nameh* are: the romance of Zal and Rudaba, Rustam and Sohrab, Siyavash and Sudaba, the romance of Behzad and Manijeh, the wars with Afrasiyab, and Rustam and Isfandiar.

In the legend of Rustam and Sohrab, Ferdowsi begins with a lyrical and detailed prelude, and is at the zenith of his poetic talent and becomes a true master of storytelling. The poet has devoted really a thousand verses to depict this tragedy in his masterful way which has made this tragedy as one of the most moving tales of world literature.

Ferdowsi is almost unequalled in his treatment of the pathetic sentiment. "The famous passage in which Rustam comes to know the identity of his son Sohrab whom he has unknowingly killed and that wherein Rustam is unwillingly compelled to slay the prince Asfandiyar are enough to draw tears from hearts of steel." (26)

THE HISTORICAL AGE:

In the last part of the *Shah-nameh*, the poet mentions the Ashkaniyan dynasty which is followed by the conquest of Iran by Alexander the Great and precedes that of Ardeshir I, the founder of the Sassanian dynasty. After this, the Sassanian history is related with a good deal of accuracy. The fall of the Sassanian and the Arab conquest of Iran are narrated in a

romantic manner, where Ferdowsi has demonstrated his poetic genius. Here the reader can perceive for himself how Ferdowsi laments this catastrophe and what he calls the arrival of "the army of darkness."

The historical part contained in the *Shah-nameh* is quite trustworthy and the poet has been careful enough to note the sources from which the episodes have been derived. Once while relating an episode he says –

"*Gar az dastan yak sakhun kam budi,*

Rawan-i-mara jae matam budi."

(Tr.) If my history be reduced even by a single word,
My soul would be plunged in lamentation. (27)

The *Shah-nameh* started with Keyumars, the first man, and ended with his fiftieth scion and successor, Yazdgerd III, thus detailing almost six thousand years of Iran. By composing the *Shah-nameh*, Ferdowsi was able to prevent the history from being lost to future Iranian generations.

CULTURAL TREASURE:

The *Shah-nameh* is not only the work of myths, romantic heroes and ancient history of Iran but also the cultural treasure of the Iranians. It is an authentic account of their ancient religious, political and social condition; legal and political systems; military organization; philosophy, arts and industries; and also depicts their territorial expansion, the exploits of its heroes, the wiles of the wicked, the spiritual force of the saints and various other matters of importance and interest to the students of ancient Iran. For Iranians, it is also a record of their morals, manners and customs and their hopes, ideals and aspirations.

Besides being an epic poem, Ferdowsi has decorated it with many universal virtues and moral concepts. According to the expert Khaleghi-Matlaq, the *Shah-nameh* teaches: *Yakta-Parasti*, worship of One God; *Khuda-Tarsi*, fear of breaking the commandments of God; *Din-Dari*, religious uprightness; *Mihan Doosti*, Patriotism; *Mehr ba Zan o Farzand*, love of wife, family and children; *Dastgireyeh Darmandegan*, helping the poor; *Khiradmandi*, pursuit of wisdom; *Dad-khwahi*, pursuit of Justice; *Door-andeshi*, long-term thinking; *Miyan-i-Ravi*, seeking and acting in moderation; *Adaab-dani*, courtesy; *Mehman-nawazi*, hospitality; *Jawan-mardi*, chivalry; *Bakshish*, forgiveness; *Sipas-guzari*, thankfulness; *Khushnoodi o Khursandi*, being happy with existence – contentment; *Kushai*, hard work; *Wafadari*, being faithful; *Rasti-o-Durush-kari*, truth and truthful living; *Paiman-dari*, keeping promises; *Sharm-o-Ahestagi*, shame at committing immoral acts; *Khamoshi*, not acting loud or modesty; *Danish-amoozi*, education; *Sukhan-dani*, knowledge of words; and many other moral qualities which have to be inculcated in one's day-to-day activities. (28)

The *Shah-nameh* is the only extant work which reflects adequately the past splendour and magnificence of Iran. By this work, Ferdowsi has raised Iran in the esteem of the world. The *Shah-nameh* occupies an honoured place among the world-epics. (29) The French scholar M. Mohl, in his "*Introduction to The Shah-nameh*", has greatly extolled Ferdowsi's adherence to historical truths, especially in the historical section, (30) while Maulana Shibli Numani, in his Urdu work "*Sher'ul Ajam*", even goes to the length of saying that on the whole no detailed history of ancient Iran is so anxious to observe truth as the *Shah-nameh*. (31)

CULTURAL INFLUENCE;

Ferdowsi's *Shah-nameh* has exercised enormous influence on Iranian cultural history over the centuries. His work has served as a literary mould from which one can make fresh heroic and saintly paradigms. Inspired by Ferdowsi, many rulers in medieval history commissioned court poets to celebrate their reigns in eulogistic verse-chronicles that have also served as valuable historical sources for later historians. The *Shah-nameh* also exercised a great influence in Turkey, Central Asia and India where, in due course of time, Persian became the *lingua franca*.

According to the Turkish historian, Mehmet Fuad Koprulu, there is no doubt that Persian influence was paramount among the Seljuqs of Anatoliya. This is clearly revealed by the fact that the Sultans who ascended the throne after Ghiyasuddin Kai-Khusrow I (1192-1246) assumed titles taken from ancient Iranian mythology such as Kai Khusrow, Kai-Kaus, and Qubad. So much so that some passages from the *Shah-nameh* were inscribed on the walls of Koniya and Sivas. (32)

Over the years, heroic legends and stories of *Shah-nameh* have remained the main source of the story-telling for the peoples of Iranian cultural continent of Pashtuns, Afghans, Kurds, Gurans, Armenians, Georgians, North Caucasian and even people of North-West India.

ON THE MUGHALS IN INDIA:

The Mughal Empire was ruled by Mughal Emperors (1526-1857) who were direct descendents of Genghis Khan and Taimur and claimed amalgam with the culture of Turan and directly patronized the *Shah-nameh*, the master-piece of Ferdowsi. It greatly inspired the servicemen in the Mughal Army.

Manuscripts of the *Shah-nameh* were copied and profusely illustrated with miniatures during the reign of Babur, Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Muhammad Shah. The first Mughal Emperor Babur himself quoted verses from the *Shah-nameh* prior to the important battle of Khanwa. Among the most notable Mughal noblemen inspired by the *Shah-nameh* was the Nawab of Bengal, Alivardi Khan.

After Ferdowsi's *Shah-nameh*, a number of other works similar in nature surfaced over the centuries within the cultural sphere of the Persian language but none of them could quite achieve the same degree of fame and popularity.

ESTIMATE

Ferdowsi is one of the undisputed giants of the Persian literature. His *Shah-nameh* is the most popular and influential national epic of Iran and other Persian-speaking nations. It is the only surviving work by Ferdowsi. It is possible that Ferdowsi wrote other poems but they are no longer extant.

Ferdowsi's *Shah-nameh* is at the apex of what is known as the "Exalted Style", or *Sabk-i-Fakhr*. By glorifying the Iranian past in heroic and exalted verses, he has presented the "Ajam" with a sense of pride and inspiration that has helped preserve an identity for the Iranians over the ages. Ferdowsi set a model to be followed by subsequent generations.

There is also speculation about the genuineness of the satire alleged to have been composed by Ferdowsi about Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna when the Sultan is supposed to have failed to adequately reward him for his efforts. Most of the scholars today reject that (33) and its authority is challenged.

Ferdowsi occupies a unique place in Persian literary history because of his poetic rendition took great strides in reviving and regenerating Persian language, especially Iranian cultural traditions. His work is cited as a crucial component of persistence in the Persian language as much of Persian tongue remained codified and intact. In this respect, scholars hold Ferdowsi in high esteem and concur that he surpasses Nizami, Khayyam, Asadi Tusi and other seminal Persian literary figures. Many modern Iranians see him as the father of modern Persian language.

In 1934 Ferdowsi's Millenary celebrations were held in Iran by Raza Shah Pahlavi, an ardent admirer of Ferdowsi, which was attended by Iranians and Orientalists from all over the world.

I conclude by the comments made by Encyclopaedia Britannica: "The Persians regard Ferdowsi as the greatest of their poets. For nearly a thousand years they have continued to read and to listen to recitation from his master-work, the *Shah-nameh*, in which the Persian national epic found its final and enduring form." (34)

This is indeed a great tribute paid to Ferdowsi.

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OMAR KHAYYAM

**GHIYASUDDIN ABUL FATH IBN IBRAHIM
OMAR AL-KHAYYAM (1048-1131) :
A PERSIAN POLYMATH, PHILOSOPHER,
MATHEMATICIAN AND POET**

ABSTRACT

Ghiyasuddin Abul Fath ibn Ibrahim Omar al-Khayyam Nishapuri, born in Nishapur in the region of Khusrasan in 1048, was a multi-faceted personality – a Persian polymath, philosopher, scientist, mathematician, astronomer and poet. He also wrote treatises on mechanics, geography, mineralogy, music and Islamic theology. (1) Whereas his mathematical works and Persian poetry have been the subject of much discussion, his recently edited and published philosophical and scientific works have remained a largely neglected area of study. His significance in the annals of Islamic intellectual tradition is due mainly to his *Rubaiyyat* (quatrains) and his works in the field of mathematics, the latter has always been overshadowed by his poetry.

Outside Iran and Persian – speaking countries, Omar Khayyam has had an impact on literature and societies through the translation of his works and popularization by other scholars. The greatest impact was made by him in English – speaking countries first by the English scholar Thomas Hyde (1636-1703), followed by others, but the most influential of all was Edward Fitz Gerald (1809-83) who made Omar Khayyam the most famous poet of the East in the West through his celebrated transliteration and adaptations of a small number of quatrains in the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*.

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Omar Khayyam, or al-Khayyami as he is called in Arabic, who, "Thanks to the genius of FitzGerald, enjoys a celebrity in Europe, especially in England and America, far greater than that which he has attained in his own country, where his fame rests rather on his mathematical and astronomical than on his poetical achievements." (2)

As information about his early life is scanty and scattered, we have to collect it from various sources to place it in an orderly form. The oldest accounts of him are contained in the *Chahar Maqala*, or "Four Discourses" of Nizami Aruzi Samarqandi, which the latter wrote in the latter part of the twelfth century. Nizami Aruzi, it must be noted, does not mention the name of Omar Khayyam in that Section which treats of Poets, but that which treats of Astrologers and Astronomers. (3) Among the other old references to Omar Khayyam, one appears to be in the *Mirsadul – Ibad*, or "Observatory of God's Servants," composed in 1223 by Najmuddin Razi, a fervent Sufi mystic who speaks of Omar as "an unhappy philosopher, atheist and materialist", adducing in proof of his assertion two of his quatrains. (4)

The next reference of Omar Khayyam is made in Al-Qifti's *History of the Philosophers*, a work composed in Arabic in the second quarter of the thirteenth century, in which he is represented as "without an equal in astronomy and philosophy", but as an advanced free-thinker, constrained only by prudential motives to bridle his tongue. Citation about Omar is concluded by four of his verses from an Arabic poem. (5)

Another account of Omar Khayyam appears in Al-Sharazuri's *Nuzhatul – Aswah*, or "Recreations of Souls", compiled in the thirteenth century, and exists both in an Arabic

and a Persian version. Omar Khayyam appears in both the versions. Al-Shahrazuri's account is a good deal fuller than Al-Qifti's. It describes Omar as a follower of Avicenna, but ill-tempered and inhospitable, and mentions the titles of two of his philosophical works. (6) "His memory is stated to have been so good that having read a certain book seven times through at Isfahan, he afterwards wrote it out almost word for word at Nishapur." (7) It is also mentioned that he was disliked by the great theologian Abu Hamid Muhammad Al-Ghazali.

The next reference of Omar Khayyam occurs in Qazwini's *Asar-ul-Bilad*, or "Monuments of Countries" wherein Omar is described as "versed in all kinds of philosophy, especially mathematics", and as favoured by Sultan Malik Shah. (8)

All these earlier records consistently represent Omar Khayyam as essentially a philosopher, astronomer, and mathematician, and that, his being represented as a mystic, he is strongly denounced by Sufi Najumuddin Razi as the arch-free thinker of his time.

The information gathered from various sources about early life of Omar Khayyam is as follows –

Omar Khayyam was born in 1048 in Nishapur in Iran, then a Seljuq capital of Khurasan (9) and his name was Ghiyasuddin Abul Fath Ibn. Ibrahim Omar Al-Khayyam in a family of tent-makers (*Khayyami* means "tent-maker"). Nishapur in those days rivaled Cairo or Baghdad in cultural and literary prominence. Omar spent part of his childhood in Balkh, studying under the well-known scholar Sheikh Muhammad Mansuri. Later he studied under the renowned Imam Mowaffaq Nishapuri, who was considered as one of the greatest teachers of Khurasan region. He also studied philosophy at Nishapur.

The political events of the eleventh century played a major role in the course of Khayyams growing up. The Seljuq Turks had occupied Khurasan between 1038 and 1040 and conquered all of north-eastern Iran. It was in these difficult and unstable times that Omar Khayyam grew up. These were not the times where even those learned as Omar Khayyam found life easy unless they had the support and patronage of a ruler at one of the many courts.

In spite of the political turmoil, Omar Khayyam established himself as an outstanding mathematician and astronomer and wrote several works including *Problems of Arithmetic*, a book on music, and one on algebra before he was twenty-five. In 1070 he moved to Samarkand, one of the oldest cities of learning in Central Asia. There Khayyam was supported by Abu Tahir, a prominent jurist of Samarkand, and this gave him the opportunity of writing his most famous algebra work, *Treatise on Demonstration of Problems of Algebra*. In the introduction of this book he laments –

"I was unable to devote myself to the learning of this algebra and the continued concentration upon it, because of obstacles in the vagaries of time which hindered me; for we have been deprived of all the people of knowledge save for a group, small in number, with many troubles, whose concern in life is to snatch the opportunity, when time is asleep, to devote themselves meanwhile to the investigation and perfection of a science." (10)

Seljuq Sultan Malik Shah, grandson of Tughril Beg, was the ruler of Isfahan from 1073, and his Vizier, Nizamul Mulk, was the real power behind the ruler. Omar Khayyam was invited by the Sultan to go to Isfahan to set up an Observatory there

and other leading astronomers were also invited. Omar Khayyam went to Isfahan and for eighteen years, he led the scientists who produced work of outstanding quality. It was a period of peace which allowed Omar Khayyam to devote himself to his scholarly work. It was in the year 1079, (11) Khayyam introduced many reforms in the Jalali Calendar which were accepted by Sultan Malik Shah. (12)

Because of his erudition and astrological knowledge, Omar Khayyam became an advisor to Sultan Malik Shah in Isfahan. Throughout his stay in Isfahan, he was tireless in his efforts: by day he would teach algebra and geometry, in the evening he would attend the Seliuq Court as an adviser to Malik Shah, (13) and at night he would study astronomy. His stay in Isfahan was very productive in all respects.

In 1092 political events put an end to Omar Khayyam's period of peaceful existence. It was in the early part of 1092 that Nizamul Mulk, the Vizier, was murdered on the road from Isfahan to Baghdad by the Assassins. (14) A few months later Sultan Malik Shah died. Sultan's second wife took over as the ruler who ruled for two years. She was not on good terms with Nizamul Mulk so those whom he had supported were out of her favour. Omar Khayyam also came under attack and funding of the Observatory also stopped. Meanwhile, Khayyam asked for permission to perform Hajj. After his pilgrimage, Omar Khayyam hoped to win favour and came back to Isfahan. He was allowed to work as a court astrologer only. Not finding the atmosphere congenial to his temperament, he sought permission from the ruler to return to his native place Nishapur which was granted. He came back to Nishapur where he was already well known for his works. He continued to teach mathematics, and perhaps wrote many of his *Ruba'is*. Omar Khayyam died in

1131 and was buried in Khayyam Garden at the mausoleum of Imamzadeh Mahruq in Nishapur. In 1963 an imposing mausoleum was constructed on the site by Hooshang Seyhoun.

(15)

ACHIEVEMENTS OF OMAR KHAYYAM

Omar Khayyam was a polymath, scientist, mathematician, astronomer, philosopher and poet of Persian.

As mathematician and scientist, Omar Khayyam's writings, both in Arabic and Persian, are similar to his texts in other genres: they are relatively few in number, but deal with well-chosen topics and carry deep implications. Some of his mathematical writings relate, in passing, to philosophical matters, such as, reasoning from postulates, and definitions; but his significant work deals mainly with internal work of mathematics, in particular boundary between geometry and algebra. (16) In his mathematical writings, Omar Khayyam has also discussed on: a) Solutions of Cubic Equations; b) The Parallel Postulates and the Theory of Ratios; and c) Root Calculations and the Binominal Theorem. (17) In his *Algebra* treatise he has given a geometric method for solving equations by intersecting *hyperbole* with a *circle*.

We know, that Khayyam also wrote a treatise called *Problems of Arithmetic*, which is now lost involving the determination of n -th roots.

As an astronomer Khayyam moved to Isfahan in 1074, to establish a new observatory under the patronage of Malik Shah, the Seljuq Sultan, and his Vizier, Nizamul Mulk. There he created Jalali Calendar which was accepted by Malik Shah in 1079. In addition to the calendar, the Isfahan observatory also produced the *Zij Malik Shah*, only fragments of which are now available. It is believed that it must have been one of the more important astronomical handbooks. (18)

After briefly describing Omar Khayyam's contribution as a mathematician, scientist and astronomer, I shall now deal with Omar Khayyam as a philosopher and Persian poet in some details.

OMAR KHAYYAM AS A PHILOSOPHER

Omar Khayyam himself rejected to be labelled as a *falsafi*, or a philosopher, in the Aristotelianism and stressed he wishes "to know who am I." In the context of philosophers he was labelled by some of his contemporaries as "detached from divine blessings" (19)

It is now established that Omar Khayyam taught philosophy of Avicenna (Bu Ali Sina), especially the *Book of Healing*, in his hometown Nishapur after his return from Isfahan, till his death. (20) As a philosopher, he can be understood from two distinct sources: 1) his philosophical works and 2) his *Rubaiyyat*. (21) His philosophical works were evaluated by many earlier scholars, such as, Abul Fazl Baihaqi, Nizami Aruzi Samarqandi and Al-Zamakhshan, and Sufi poets and writers Attar of Nishapur and Najmuddin Razi.

Omar Khayyam wrote about fourteen treatises, some of them recently edited and published, which, in the past, remained a largely neglected area of study. The works which have been recently edited and published are:

1. "A Translation of Ibn Sina's Lucid Discourses" – *Khutba al-Ghurra Ibn Sina*. (22)
2. "On Being and Necessity" – *Risalat fi'l – Kaun Wa'l – Taklif*, (23)
3. "On the Necessity of Contradiction in the World, Determination and Substance" – *Zarurat al-Tazad fi'l Alam wa'l jabr wa'd Baqa*. (24)
4. "The Light of the Intellect on the Subject of Universal Knowledge" – *Risala al-Ziya al-Aqli fi Mauza al-Ilm al-Kulli*. This treatise is also called

"The Treatise on Transcendence in Essence" – *Al-Risala al-Ula fi'l Wujud*. (25)

5. "On the Knowledge of the Universal Principles of Existence" – *Risala dar Ilm Kulliyat-i-Wujud* (26)
6. "On Existence" – *Risala fi'l Wujud* (27)
7. "Response to Three Philosophical Problems" – *Risala Jawaban Thulath Masa'il* (28)

Except the first work mentioned above, which is a free translation and commentary on a discourse by Ibn Sina, the other six philosophical treatises represent Omar Khayyam's own independent philosophical views. This was at a time when philosophers in the Islamic world were the targets of narrow-minded orthodox Muslim jurists and *Ulema*. Khayyam defended himself against the charge of "being a philosopher."

"A philosopher I am, " my enemies falsely say,
But God knows I am not what they say.
While in the sorrow-laden nook, I reside
Need to know who I am, and why here stay. (29)

According to Aminrazvi, Omar Khayyam, in his philosophical treatises, defines 'philosophy' along the Peripatetic tradition. (30) According to this tradition the essential and real issues that are discussed in philosophy are three, first – "Is it?", second – "What is it?", and the third – "Why is it?". While these are standard Aristotelian questions, for Khayyam they had a wider range of philosophical implications. In his treatises he has discussed in detail– on the following subjects: (31)

1. The existence of God, His attributes and knowledge.
2. Gradation of being and the problem of Unity and multiplicity.

3. Eschatology (transmigration of soul)
4. Theodicy (the problem of evil)
5. Determination and free will
6. Subjects and predicates
7. Existence, (*wujud*) and essence. (*mahiyyah*).

In his philosophical renderings on the Existence of God, Omar Khayyam refers to God as "Necessary Being" and offers "several cosmological, theological, and ontological arguments for His existence." (32) He also discusses issues such as causality and the impossibility of a claim of causes and effects, and the complex nature of Divine essence.

With regard to the difficult problem of gradation of being and the manner in which they are ranked is also discussed and endorses the views of Avicenna to whom he has, at many places, referred as his master. Some accuse Omar Khayyam of believing in transmigration of soul. According to his philosophical treatise, it can be said, he did believe in life after death and many Islamic philosophers hold that Omar Khayyam's views were within the parameters of the traditional Islamic eschatological doctrine. (34) With regard to the problem of theodicy, Omar Khayyam has discussed both in his treatises as well as in his poetry. As a philosopher, he offers a rational existence of evil, but in his poetry he strongly condemns the presence of evil and finds no acceptable justification for its presence.

With regard to determinism and free will, Omar Khayyam is held as a determinist. In his treatise Omar Khayyam indicates that determinism is close to his philosophical perspective provided it is not taken to its extreme. In a rather complex discussion on the relationship between the subject, predicate, and attributes using a mixture of original insight and Aristotelian

precedent Omar Khayyam proposes that conceiving essential attributes necessitates the presence of a concept such as "animality which is an essential attribute of man." (35) On existence and essence, Omar Khayyam equates existence and essence as having emanated from God in an orderly fashion, but there is no explanation as to how essence becomes primary and existence secondary. It can be said, he may simply have presented the arguments in accordance with the beliefs held in Islamic philosophy.

In his philosophical expositions, Omar Khayyam was meticulous, rational and mathematical and wrote as a Muslim philosopher and treats a variety of traditional philosophical problems. In his philosophy he has also discussed all the aspects in detail. It is regrettable that his philosophical works which throw light on his advanced stage of philosophical attainments are least studied aspect of his thoughts. This might have been because his philosophical works were not even available in published form until a few years ago. Quoting Aminrazavi, "They permit a fresh look at overall Khayyaminian thought and prove indispensable to an understanding of his *Rubaiyyat*. In his philosophical works, Khayyam writes as a Muslim philosopher and treats a variety of traditional philosophical problems, but in his *Rubaiyyat*, our Muslim philosopher morphs into an agnostic Epicurean. A detailed study of Khayyam's philosophical works reveal several explanation for this dichotomy, the most likely of which is the conflict between pure and practical reasoning." (36)

KHAYYAM AS A POET

Iran has always been a land of poetry, nor has the lyric quality ever been lost from the voice of her people. Poetry has always offered Iranians an answer to their existential problem and has given inspiration to writers and artists. The Iranian aptitude for versifying everyday expressions is so strong, especially from the time Neo-Persian emerged in the ninth century, that one can encounter poetry in almost every classical work, whether of Persian literature, science, metaphysics or history. For any scholar, in any branch of knowledge, it was a pre-requisite to have the ability to write in verse form. For example, half of medical writing of Avicenna (Bu Ali Sina – 980-1037) are in verse. Omar Khayyam, born in Nishapur in 1048, a renowned mathematician, astronomer, and philosopher, was no exception to this rule. He also composed *Rubaiyyat* (quatrains) in Persian which enabled him to express gems of wisdom.

Although Omar Khayyam's *Rubaiyyat* have been admired in the Persian – speaking world since long, they have only been known to the West from the mid 19th century, especially when Edward Fitz Gerald rendered the *Rubaiyyat* into English.

It is said that Omar Khayyam composed anything between 500 and 1000 *Rubaiyyat*. The overwhelming majority of the literary works have been devoted to the monumental task of determining the authentic *Rubaiyyat* from the inauthentic ones. However, skipping the controversy, I shall rely on the most authentic and authoritative *Rubaiyyat*, a few examples of which are given here with their renderings into English by Edward Fitz Gerald:

RUBAIYYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

این کینه رباط را که عالم نام است
و آرام گه ابلق صبح و شام است
بزمیست که دامانده صد جمشید است
قصریست که تکیه گاه صد بهرام است

Think, in this batter'd Caravanserai,
Whose Portals are alternate Night and Day,
How Sultan after Sultan with his Pomp
Abode his destin'd Hour, and went away.

آنانکه ز پیش رفته اند ای ساقی
در خاک غرور خفته اند ای ساقی
رو باده خور و حقیقت از من بشنو
باد است هر آنچه گفته اند ای ساقی

Why, all the Saints and Sages who discuss'd
Of the Two Worlds so learnedly, are thrust
Like foolish Prophets forth; their words to Scorn
Are scatter'd, and their Mouths are stopt with Dust.

می خور که بزیر گل بسی خواهی خفت
بی مونس و بی رفیق و بی همدم و جفت
ز نهار بکس مگو تو این راز نهفت
هر لاله که پر مرد نخواهد بشگفت

Oh, come with old Khayyam, and leave the Wise
To talk; one thing is certain, that life, flies;
One thing is certain, and the Rest is Lies;
The Flower that once has blown for ever dies.

یاران موافق همه از دست شدند
در پای اجل یکان یکان پست شدند
خوردیم زینک شراب در مجلس عمر
دوری دوسه پیشتر ز مامت شدند

Lo! Some are loved, the loveliest and the best
That Time and Fate of all their Vintage prest,
Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before
And one by one crept silently to Rest.

لب بر لب کوزه بُردم از غایت آرز
تساز و طلبم واسطه عمر در آرز
لب بر لب من نهاده می گفت بر آرز
می خور که بدین جهان نمی آئی باز

Then to this earthen Bowl did I adjourn
My Lip the secret Well of Life to learn.
And Lip to Lip it murmur'd – "While you live,
Drink! – for once dead you never Shall return."

هنگام صبح است و خروش آه ساقی
ما و می و کسوی می فروش آه ساقی
چه جامی صلاح است خموش آه ساقی
بگذر ز حدیث دورد و نوش آه ساقی

And, as the Cock crew, those who stood before
The Tavern shouted – "Open then the Door.
You know how little while we have to stay,
And, once departed, may return no more."

نیکی و بدی که در نهاد بشر است
شادی و غمی که در قضا و قدر است
با چرخ مکن حواله کاندرو عقل
چرخ از تو هزار بار بیچاره تر است

And that inverted Bowl we call the Sky,
Whereunder crawling coop't we live and die,
Lift not thy hands to It for help – for It
Rolls impotently on as Thou or I.

افسوس که نامه جوانی طئی شد
و آن تازه بهار زندگانی دی شد
آن مرغ طرب که نام او بود شباب
فریاد ندانم که کی آمد کی شد

Alas, that Spring should vanish with the Rose!
That Youth's sweet-scented Manuscript should close!
The Nightingale that in the Branches sang,
Ah, whence, and whither flown again, who knows!

مگزار که شمع در کنارت گیرد
و اندوه و ملال روز گارت گیرد
می خور بکنار سبزه و آب روان
ز آن پیش که خاک در کنارت گیرد

Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend
Before we too into the Dust descend;
Dust into Dust, and under Dust, to lie,
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and – sans End !

تا هشیارم طرب ز من پنهانست
چون مست شوم در خردم نقصانست
حالی است میان مستی و هشیاری
من شادم از آنکه زندگانی آنست

As long as I am sober enjoyment is hidden from me,
And when I am intoxicated there is imperfection in my reason.

There is a state midway between intoxication and sobriety;

I am a slave of that state, for that is life.

من بنده عصایم رضای تو کجاست
تاریک دلم نور و صفای تو کجاست
بیرمن تو نیست اگر بطاعت بخشی
این مرد بود لطف و عطای تو کجاست

On I thou, who Man or baser Earth didst make,
And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake:
For all the Sin the Face of Wretched Man
Is black with – Man's Forgiveness give – and take!

گر دست دهد ز من ز گندم نانی
و زمی دومی ز گوشتندی رانی
و آنکه من و تو نوشته در ویرانی
عیشی بود این نه حد هر سلطانی

Here with a Loaf a Bread beneath the Bough,
A Flask of Wine, a Book of Verse – and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness –
Wilderness is Paradise enow!

In the *Rubaiyyat* of Omar Khayyam the main theme is the temporality of human existence and the suffering one endures during a seemingly senseless existence. Using the image of a *kuza*, or earthen jug, and clay throughout his *Rubaiyyat*, the poet alludes to the temporality of life and its senselessness.

In his *Rubaiyyat*, Khayyam has challenged religious doctrines, alludes to the hypocrisy of the clergy, casts doubt on almost every facet of religious belief, and appears to have advocated a type of humanism. Sadegh Hedayat (1903-1951); one of the foremost modern writers of prose in Iran, says - That Omar Khayyam's quatrains look upon "all religious questions with an air of ridicule, and has been contemptuously attacking the religious priests and jurisprudents who spoke of things they did not know. This shows revolt of Aryan spirit against Semitic beliefs, or Khayyam's revenge upon the low begoted surroundings, of the thought of whose people he was disgusted. It is evident that a philosopher like Khayyam, a free-thinker and critic, could not blindly undergo the obligatory, forged, fatalistic and unreasonable commands of his contemporary religious authorities, and to submit to their rotten and stupefying fictions. Because religion consists of a collection of obligatory orders and duties, the obedience to which is indisputably incumbent upon everybody, without the right of entertaining the slightest doubt and suspicion; and a band of guardians take advantage of those orders and use the common people as their playthings." (37) Khayyam met all these obligatory religious questions and in order to solve the important problems of life and death in a positive and logical manner plays the part of an impartial observer of natural incidents.

With regard to theodicy, or problem of evil, and justice, he complains in his quatrains, whereas, as a philosopher he has

offered a treatise entirely to justify the problem of evil. Here he is at variance – as a philosopher and as a poet. As a poet, Khayyam represents a voice of protest against what he regards to be fundamentally unjust world, which are not his views as a philosopher.

In his quatrains, Khayyam uses wine in the pedestrian sense which is construed to forget our daily suffering. In the mystical allusion, wine pertains to a type of intoxication which stands opposed to discursive thought. The esoteric use of wine and drinking, which has a long history in Iranian Sufi literature, refers to the state of ecstasy in which one is intoxicated with Divine Love. While Khayyam was not a Sufi in the traditional sense of the word, he included the mystical use of wine among his illusions. This was so as mysticism had permeated Persian poetry by his time.

In the *Rubaiyyat* of Khayyam two dimension of human existence have been discussed: philosophical and poetic. As a philosopher, Aminrazavi contends, "Khayyam defended rationalism against the rise of orthodoxy and made an attempt to revive the spirit of rationalism which was so prevalent in the first four centuries in Islam." (38) As a poet, Khayyam represents a voice of protest against what he regards to be a fundamentally unjust world. His poetry is popular today because many people find in him a voice they need to hear as they are experiencing the same trials and tribulations as Khayyam had in his times.

In his *Rubaiyyat*, Khayyam has also alluded to *Khirad*, or philosophical wisdom – wisdom that brings about a rapprochement between the poetic and discursive modes of thought. For Khayyam the mathematician – astronomer and philosopher, the universe cannot be the result of a random

chance but it is an orderly and complex physical universe; whereas it is an irony that Khayyam the poet fails to find any purpose for human existence within an orderly universe. (39) Here we find his poetry is at variance with his philosophical thoughts.

Sadegh Hedayat is of the opinion that a lot of philosophical and literary works have been left by Khayyam, but none of them will help to guide us in our research; it is only his quatrains "that reveal the secrets hidden in his heart, while the books he has compiled according to the exigencies of the time, or perhaps upon other's instructions,..... The first thing with which we meet in Khayyam's quatrains is that the editor, fearlessly and with the highest degree of bravery, refuses with relentless logic to accept any of the frailties and mental afflictions of his contemporaries and their dogmatic and scholastic philosophy, being recalcitrant to all their claims and sayings." (40)

CONCLUSION

In the final analysis of Khayyam the poet, I can say from his *Rubaiyyat* that he was a pessimist poet – for that matter most of the Iranian poets are – and that he had also a high philosophical aspect to his character which is eclipsed by his poetry. His thoughts, in his poems, are always mixed with sorrow, grief, death, and annihilation, but, at the same time, he invites human beings to happiness and enjoyment. These contradictions are quite pronounced in his poetry.

In my opinion, Khayyam's life in Isfahan, until the death of Sultan Malik Shah and his vizier Nizamul Mulk when both of them died in 1192, was very orderly, very productive and very satisfying in his diligent pursuits of philosophical and astronomical works and achievements; but, thereafter, due to his falling from grace in the court, vagaries of nature, uncertainty of future, his stray thoughts at Nishapur poured out at random, in his vacant and pensive moods, in the form of *Rubaiyyat* protesting against what he regards to be fundamentally unjust world.

Khayyam's bold spirit of enquiry and his questioning of accepted wisdom had a mixed and often hostile early reception in Iran. In his *rubai's*, the themes of mutability and transience and the need for resigned fortitude in the face of the celestial wheel only appear in the foreground, but it was a kind of revolt which proved to be the instigator of a way of thinking and an outlook which profoundly affected the course and content of Persian literature throughout its subsequent history.

I must also mention here that the western image, especially in the United Kingdom, solidified by the Victorian sense of the exotic, romantic, and often erotic notions attached to the east,

was echoed through the rendition of the *Rubaiyyat* by Edward Fitz Gerald in the nineteenth century. So much so that in the colleges and universities, students, scholars and teachers quoted them on all occasions with relish. By the early twentieth century *Rubaiyyat* caught the imagination of students and teachers of humanities in colleges and universities of the Indian sub-continent and Omar Khayyam became the most popular poet. It is said that when Thomas Hardy, English novelist and poet, lay dying in his eighty-eighth year in 1928, he asked to have one particular *Ruba'i*, which runs thus, read to him :

O Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make,
And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake:
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blackened – Man's forgiveness give – and take! (41)

This sums up the ultimate tribute of a renowned British litterateur for the *Rubaiyyat* of Omar Khayyam.

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12. Jalali Calendar is a solar calendar that was used in Iran as well as Afghanistan. This Calendar was adopted by Sultan Jalaluddin Malik Shah (1055-1092) in 1079 after whom it is named. This was based on the recommendations of a committee of astronomers, including Omar Khayyam, at the Imperial Observatory in Isfahan. According to this calendar the year was computed from the vernal equinox and each month was determined by the transit of the sun into the corresponding Zodiac region, a system that incorporated improvement on ancient Indian system of the *Surya – Sidhanta* of the 4th century. (For fuller details refer to "Omar Khayyam", the Mac Tutor History of Mathematics archive.)
13. Edward FitzGerald – *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, p.XV.
14. It was a terrorist movement.
15. Hooshang Seyhoun, a prominent Iranian architect is known for the designs of mausoleums of Avicenna and Omar Khayyam, among others.
16. *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* – (2011) Article by Mehdi Ammirazavi and Glen Van Brummelen "Umar Khayyam."
17. Ibid.
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19. Bausani, A., Chapter 3 in *Cambridge History of Iran* (5), p.289.
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21. Ibid., chapter 9, pp.170-1.
22. Aminrazavi, *op. cit* 2007, pp.303-317.
23. Ibid., pp.321-342.
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26. Ibid.
27. In *Farhang*, Vol.12 (1-4), p.124.
28. Ibid., pp.167-68.
29. This has been translated by Aminrazavi.
30. Peripatetic is Aristotelian – so called from Aristotle's custom of walking in Lyceum while teaching.

31. These *Risalas* have been discussed in greater detail by Aminrazavi in his article in *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*.
32. Ibid.
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38. *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, op.cit.*
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NIZAMI GANJAVI

ABU MUHAMMAD ILYAS NIZAMI GANJAVI – (1141-1209):
THE GREATEST MASTER OF PERSIAN ROMANTIC
MESNAVI

ABSTRACT

Nizami Ganjavi's formal name was Nizamuddin Abu Muhammad Ilyas ibn Yusuf ibn Zakki. He is the acknowledged master of romantic *mesnavi* in Persian literature, (1) whose influence and popularity in Iran as well as Turkey to this day, is unsurpassed in his own line. He was responsible for bringing a colloquial and realist style to the Persian epic. (2) His heritage is widely appreciated and shared in all the regions where *lingua franca* is, or has been at one time or other, Persian. (3) As a narrative poet, Nizami Ganjavi stands between Ferdowsi (940-1020), the poet of Iran's heroic tradition and the author of *Shah-Nameh*, and Jalaluddin Rumi (1207-1273), whose *Diwan-i-Kabir* and *Kitab-i-Mesnavi-i-Ma'anavi* which virtually define the mystical lyric and mystical narrative poetry, respectively. Nizami Ganjavi is ranked as the unrivalled master of the romantic apogee in Persian.

A BRIEF LIFE-SKETCH

Nizami was born of urban background in Ganja in the great Seljuq empire, now part of Azerbaijan and, it is believed, he spent a large part of his life in South Caucasus. Ganja in those days was a city with predominant Iranian population.(4) It is further confirmed by the Armenian historian Kirakos Gandzaketsi (c. 1200-1271), who mentions that "The city was densely populated with Iranians and a small number of Christians".(5) Nizami's name does not appear in the annals of the dynasties (6) as he was not a court poet. However, his name appears in the *Tazkiras*, or literary memoirs that include maxims of great poets, written by biographers and critics, Iranian and non-Iranian, including Awfi, Qazwini, Dawlatshah and Lutf Ali Beg, amongst others, all hailing Nizami as an original poet in Persian and a noble genius. But much of what appears in *Tazkiras* is based on legends, anecdotes and hearsay. (7) Whatever authentic account about his life we gather is from his own works.(8)

Nizami was the son of Yousuf ibn Zakki and Raisa, his mother, both of Iranian descent of Kurdish background. (9) He was orphaned at an early age and was raised by his maternal uncle by the name of Khwaja Umar who afforded him excellent education which provided a strong base for his subsequent literary excellence.

The early death of his parents illustrated to him in a forcible manner the unstableness of all human existence, throwing a gloom over his whole life, and fostering in him that earnest piety and fervent love for solitude and meditation which have left numerous traces in his poetical compositions. This also served him throughout his literary career as a powerful antidote against the enticing favours of princely courts, for which he never sacrificed his self-esteem.

Nizami was married three times. His first wife, who gave birth to his only son Muhammad in or about 1175, died soon after when he completed his epic *Khusrow wa Shirin*. His son was barely seven then. Strangely enough, Nizami's other two wives, too, died prematurely – the death of each coinciding with the completion of an epic which prompted the poet to say, "God, why is it that for every *mesnavi* I must sacrifice a wife." (10) A few years after completing his fifth and last poem, the *Haft Paikar*, Nizami died in 1209. Of Nizami's life, beyond the above facts, we know very little.

Azerbaijanis, throughout the course of history, have been known for their cordiality, generosity, appreciativeness and truthfulness. These characteristics are reflected in their personalities and Nizami was also amply endowed with them. Persian poetry was very popular in Ganja as can be seen from the poetry of poetess Mahasati Ganjavi (c1089-c1159) who preceded Nizami by a few years, and became a companion of Sultan Sanjar Seljuq (1117-1157).

NIZAMI'S ACHIEVEMENTS

About Nizami's prodigious learning there is no doubt. He is usually referred to as a philosopher – poet. Nizami was not a philosopher in the strict sense of the term nor an expositor of theoretical Sufism but he can be regarded as a Gnostic who mastered various fields of Islamic thoughts which he tried to synthesize. In those days poets were expected to be well versed in many subjects and he tried to learn as many branches of knowledge as possible. His poems show that not only he was fully acquainted with Arabic and Persian literatures but was also sufficiently familiar with such diverse fields as mathematics, astronomy, astrology, alchemy, medicine, botany, Quranic exegesis, Islamic theory and law, Iranian myths and legends, history, ethics, philosophy, and esoteric thought, music and visual arts. With his strong character, social sensibility and written historical records, as well as his rich Iranian cultural heritage, he was able to unite pre-Islamic and Islamic Iran into the creation of a new standard of literary achievement.

I must mention here that unlike other parts of Iran in the twelfth century where the poets mostly belonged to the higher echelons of society such as scholars, bureaucrats and secretaries, a good number of poets in the northwestern regions, such as Ganja, rose from among the common people and they frequently used colloquial expressions in their poetic compositions. (11) Since in the northwestern regions there was a unique conglomeration of mixture of ethnic cultures, the works of poets reflect the linguistic and cultural diversity of the region. (12)

By the end of the tenth century, Persian literature became widespread from the eastern Mediterranean to the banks of Indus. (13) Professor Chelkowski writes in "Literature in Pre-Safavid Isfahan": "The three main literary styles which follow

each other consecutively are known as: Khurasani, Iraqi, and Hindi. The time span of each style are equally flexible. Within these broad geographical divisions we then come across certain "literary schools" which reflect regional peculiarities and idiosyncrasies and are identified with smaller entities like provinces or towns. For example there are the Azerbaijani school, the Tabriz school, or the Shirvan school." (14) Qatir Tabrizi (1009-1072) was considered the founder of "Azerbaijani" school of Persian poetry. This school was responsible for producing a distinctive style of poetry in Persian, which contrasted with Khurasani or "Eastern" style in its rhetorical sophistication, its innovative use of metaphor and its use of terminology. (15)

The Saljuqs took Ganja in 1075 A.D. and with that Persian spread west-wards to their courts. From then onwards Persian remained the primary language and Persian culture characteristically flourished in this area with the diffusion of political power Persian continued to remain the main language. (16)

According to Prof. Chelkowski: "it seems that Nizami's favourite pastime was reading Ferdowsi's monumental epic *Shah-nameh*. "Nizami has also referred to Ferdowsi as the Sage (*Hakim*) and Wiseman (*Daana*)". It is the *Shah-nameh* which has been used by Nizami in his three epics – *Haft Paikar*, *Khusrow wa Shirin* and *Sikandarnamah*. He also asserts that "Probably no Persian writer has inspired succeeding generations of poets more than Nizami." (17)

Nizami was not a panegyrist or a court-poet, as for instance Anvari was; therefore, he eschewed panegyric and avoided courts, though he adhered to the prevailing custom of his time as to dedicate his poems to the contemporary rulers. (18)

NIZAMI'S PERSIAN LYRIC POETRY

Nizami lived in an age of both political instability and intense intellectual and literary activity but scarcely anything is known about his life. The legends which have come down to us are the work of his later biographers.

Only a small corpus of his lyric poetry mainly *qasidas* (panegyric odes) and *ghazals* (lyrics) have survived. Ten of his *rubais* (quatrains) have also been recorded in the anthology *Nuzhat al-Majalis*, which was compiled by Jamal Khalil Sherwani in 1250, in which his poetic renderings along with the works of another twenty three poets from Ganja are mentioned. (19)

KHAMSA OF NIZAMI

Nizami is best known for his five long narrative poems which have been preserved. He dedicated his poems to various rulers of the region, as was then customary for all the great poets of the age, but he avoided court life. (20) Nizami was undoubtedly a master of the *mesnavi* style (double-rhymed) verses. His five narrative poems are collectively known as *Panj-Ganj* (Five Treasures), "Quinary" or "Quintet", also known as *Khamisa*. This collection is considered as a classic of Persian poetry.

The *Khamisa* was a popular subject for lavish manuscripts illustrated with painted miniatures in the Iranian and Mughal courts in later centuries.

1. MAKHAZAN AL-ASRAR :

The first of the 'Treasures' is *Makhzan al-Asrar*, or "the Treasury of Mysteries", which was completed by Nizami in 1165, according to some other scholars in 1176. It is a mystical poem with illustrative anecdotes and deals with esoteric subjects such as philosophy and theology. The work is influenced by Hakim Sanai of Ghazna's (d.1131) *Hadiqat al Haqiqa* or 'Garden of Truth', and is dedicated to Fakhruddin Bahram Shah, ruler of Azarbaijan.

In the poem there are twenty discourses in about 2250 Persian distichs; each discourse portrays an exemplary story on religious and ethical topics. The stories which discuss spiritual and practical concerns enjoin kingly justice, riddance of hypocrisy, warning of vanity of this world, and the need to prepare for the after life.(21) In this narrative Nizami preaches the ideal way of life and the necessity of man becoming aware of his spiritual destination. In highly rhetorical style, the aim

he pursues is to transcend the limitation of secular literatures of the courts. (22) This is not a romantic epic.

2. KHUSROW WA SHIRIN:

The story of "*Khusrow and Shirin*", which is a pre-Islamic story of Iranian origin, was completed by Nizami between 1175 and 1176. It is a story taken from Ferdowsi's *Shah-nameh* and deals with the love of Sassanian Khusrow II Parvez towards his Armenian princess Shirin and vanquishing of his love-rival Farhad (23) The poem was commissioned and dedicated to Seljuq Sultan and his brother Qizil Arsalan.

In the story of *Khusrow wa Shirin* pure and selfless love is depicted. The poem is a long one containing over 6500 distichs. The importance of this work lies in the fact that it exercised a tremendous influence on later authors and many imitations of this work were made, both in Iran and India. This epic was not only a turning point for Nizami, but also for all of Persian literature.(24)

3. LAILA O MAJNUN :

The romance of *Laila and Majnun* forms the third poem of the *Khamisa* or "Quintet" and is based on the desert story of Arabic origin which was subsequently absorbed and embellished by the Iranians. Nizami's poem has about 4800 distichs and was completed by him in about 1189. The work is dedicated to Abul Muzaffar Shirvanshah, who claimed descent from the Sassanian King whose exploits are reflected in Nizami's *Haft Paikar*.

This poem is based on the popular Arab legend of ill-starred lovers: the poet Qais falls in love with his cousin Laila, but is prevented from marrying her by Laila's father. The poet becomes so obsessed with his beloved that he starts singing about his

love in public. The obsession becomes so severe that he evaluates everything in terms of Laila, hence his sobriquet "the possessed", or *Majnun*. In love for each other both of them die and are buried side by side and are united in heaven.

In this work, Nizami has skillfully used many Arabic anecdotes in the story but, at the same time, has added a strong Iranian flavour to the legend. (25) The key themes in this narrative are: chastity, constancy and suffering through analysis of the main characters. (26)

4. SIKANDER-NAMA:

The Book of Alexander, or the Romance of Alexander, containing about 10,500 distiches, was completed by Nizami between 1194 and 1202. It was dedicated to the ruler of Ahar, Nusratuddin Bishkin b. Muhammad. The story is based on Islamic myths developed about Alexander the Great and is described in books or sections, namely, *Sharaf-Nama* and *Iqbal-Nama*.

In the *Sharaf-Nama* the poem narrates three stages in Alexander's life: first as the conqueror of the world; second as a seeker after knowledge, gaining enough knowledge to acknowledge his own ignorance; and finally as a prophet travelling once again across the world from west to east, and south to north to proclaim his monotheistic creed to the world at large. (27) The *Sharaf-Nama* concludes with Alexander's unsuccessful search for water of immortality.

In the *Iqbal-Nama* there is description of Alexander's personal growth into the ideal ruler on a model derived, through Islamic intermediaries, from Plato's Republic. (28) The poet also tells us about Alexander's discussions and debates with Greek and Indian philosophers, and the circumstances of his death.

5. HAFT PAIKAR

The *Haft Paikar* is also known as "The Seven Beauties", or the *Bahram-Nama* and is a pre-Islamic story of Iranian origin and deals with the romanticized biography of the Sassanian ruler Bahram-Gur. (29) The book is dedicated to the ruler of Maragha, Alauddin Korp Arslan.

The story deals with the life of Bahram V, the Sassanian king, who is born to Yazdegard after twenty years of childlessness and supplication to Ahura Mazda for a child. It is a romanticized biography of Bahram Gur. Here the theme has been borrowed from Ferdowsi's *Shah-Nameli* to which Nizami has alluded a number of times. (30) It deals with seven beautiful princesses from seven different regions and climes, including one from India. In his love for the beautiful brides, the affairs of the state are in disarray. Bahram wakes up from his slumber, sets the affairs of the state in order, punishes the recalcitrant officials and restores justice.

Some scholars consider *Haft Paikar* as poet's masterpiece. The chief merit in the poem lies in the fact that Nizami illustrates "the harmony of the universe, affinity of the sacred and the profane, and the concordance of ancient and Islamic Iran." (31)

NIZAMI'S POETRY

Poetry of Nizami Ganjavi amply demonstrates a keen interest in the life of ordinary people as well as much curiosity about ancient historical sites and the legends surrounding them.

Highly individualized, Nizami's works bear all the hallmarks of his predilection for hermetic and esoteric writings and sciences. Although there were thriving Sufi associations and brotherhoods in existence at the time, he did not himself become a member of any specific group. He maintained that the Word was his refuge and monastery. His poetry was greatly favoured by the Sufis in the subsequent generations.

Nizami's poetry had such a profound impact on the history of classical Persian literature that it can be regarded as a watershed in its literary history. His strength lies in his narrative techniques, the range and fecundity of its sources, and the masterly way he draws upon them and transforms them into a harmonious work of art.

LEGACY OF NIZAMI'S POETRY

The influence of Nizami's literary works on the subsequent development of Persian literature has been enormous and the *Khamisa* became a pattern that was emulated in Persian literature in Iran and other countries where at one time or the other the *lingua franca* was Persian. The legacy of Nizami is widely felt in the Islamic world. His poetry created a bridge between the pre Islamic and Islamic worlds. It not only influenced the Persian, Arabic, Turkish, Kurdish and Urdu poetry, but also exercised a profound effect on many other languages. Persian scholars and Orientalists have hailed Nizami as a significant Persian poet and declare him as the greatest exponent of romantic epic poetry in Persian literature.

Among the many eulogies written on the poetry of Nizami, the best tribute, in my opinion, is paid by the fifteenth century renowned Persian poet Jami in his *Nafhatul-Uns* where he remarks: Although most of Nizami's works on surface appear to be romantic, in reality they are a mask for the essential truths and for the explanation of divine knowledge. In his *Baharistan*, Jami has further asserted that: "Nizami's excellence is more manifest than the sun and has no need of description".

Peter J. Chalkowski, a scholar of Middle Eastern and Islamic studies, New York University, says about Nizami's work "..... it unites universality with deep-rooted artistic endeavour, a sense of justice and passion for the arts and sciences with spirituality and genuine piety, for richness and fineness of metaphor, accuracy, and profundity of psychological observation, and sheer virtuosity of storytelling, Nizami is unequalled". (32)

NIZAMI AND INDIA

In India Nizami's *Khamasa* was responsible for a new development of great significance in the history of Persian narrative poetry. Amir Khusrow (1253-1325) of Delhi who followed Nizami Ganjavi (1121-1209) by a few decades, wrote his *Khamasa* between 1298 and 1301, which emulated that of *Khamasa-i-Nizami Ganjavi* and is usually referred to as a "*Jawab*" or a "Response" or a "Reprise", established a vogue which lasted until the beginning of the 20th century. The five poems of Amir Khusrow's drew on Nizami's themes with a high degree of refashioning. This gave birth to a new line of literature that became widespread in the sub-continent of India as also in Taimurid and Safawid Iran. From then on most of the Indo-Persian poets wrote some *mesnavi* beside their lyrical *Diwans*. The didactic *mesnavi*, on many times, was drawn on in imitation of Nizami's *Makhzan al-Asrar* and Amir Khusrow's *Matla al-Anwar*, so also the romantic *mesnavis* of *Laila-o-Majnun* and *Khusrow-wa-Shirin*." (33) The two *Khamasas*, in due course of time, came to be referred to as an organic pair and gave birth to a new genre of Persian literature.(34)

Among the Persian poets of Indian subcontinent who were immensely influenced by these two *Khamasas*, and who are a legion, the names which stand out are: Faizi (1547-1595) poet-laureate of Mughal emperor Akbar, Mulla Muhsin Fani Kashmiri (d.1670) and Abdul Qadir Bedil Dehlavi (1644-1721).

A lot has been written about these two *Khamas* by critics, analysts and literati. Therefore I would not like to venture into the oft repeated comments. However I consider it apposite to say a few words here on Amir Khusrow's *Matla-al-Anwar*, meaning "Dawn of Lights," which is equivalent, or in response,

to Nizami's *Makhzanul Asrar*, meaning "The Treasury of Mysteries." In both these works there are twenty didacted chapters, or *maqalat*, which cover a variety of subjects dealing with Islamic, ethical, and courtly matters, such as, speech, mystical love, generosity, and the duties of the kings followed by short anecdotes illustrating each point.

The distinguishing point in Amir Khusrow's *Matla-al-Anwar*, in the words of Sunil Sharma, a Persian scholar, is :

"In recounting his tales, the poet uses his Indian background either as a source or as a backdrop, as in the tale illustrating the virtues of devotion in which a Muslim pilgrim learns about true piety from Brahman crawling toward his idol temple. In the twentieth *maqala* he gives advice to his seven-year-old daughter and expresses his views regarding ideal womanhood."(35)

POLITICIZATION OF NIZAMI GANJAVI

When a philosopher-poet delivers a universal message and pursues social and moral ideals through humanistic approach in his poetic compositions, many ethnic groups and nations come forward to lay their claims on him. In the twentieth century, there have been active efforts at re-defining Iranian cultural and historical icons, belonging to regions which do not form part of present day Iran, as non-Iranian primarily to fit into the ideological parametres and nation building efforts. One such figure to fall prey to politicization and nation building efforts is the Persian poet Nizami.

Azerbaijan became a part of the USSR from 1920 and remained so until 1991 when the independent Republic of Azerbaijan was formed. While Azerbaijan was part of the USSR, attempt was made to de-Iranize and detach Nizami from Iranian and club him with Turkish civilization. It was held since Nizami Ganjavi belonged to Azerbaijan which was a part of Caucasus region, he was of Caucasian nationality and that his original poetry was composed in Turkish and followed later by "*Farsi*" translation. Turkish protagonist of this and similar arguments are many such as, Seyfaddin G. Rzasoy, Head of Azerbaijan Department of Institute of Folklore, and Professor Teymur Karimli, Deputy Director of the Nizami Ganjavi Institute of Literature.

This aforementioned argument is greatly resented by the inheritors of Persian language, culture and civilization in Iran, Kurdistan and Afghanistan where the *lingua franca* is still Persian. To refute this attempt an interesting thesis has been written by Dr. Ali Doostzadeh under the title "Politicization of the Background of Nizami Ganjavi", where he analyses and writes, "The analysis of Nezami's poetic heritage makes it

absolutely clear that he was the typical product of the urban Perso-Islamic culture of the time". (36) He further continues to say, "As succinctly put by Chelkowski: 'Nezami's strong character, his social sensibility and his poetic genius fused with his rich Persian cultural heritage to create a new standard of literary achievement. Using themes from the oral tradition and written historical records, his poems unite pre-Islamic and Islamic Iran.'" (37) Ali Doostzadeh is supported by Kaveh Farrokhi (38) and many others in Iran and elsewhere.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion I would say that philosopher-poets, like prophets, belong to the entire humanity. They bring solace and fortitude to the ailing world and their message has universal appeal. Nizami was no exception in this respect. In his poetry he pursued social and moral ideals, and his approach was humane. His message to mankind was to follow the spiritual path to reach the highest spiritual reality ("The Magian Tavern"). Nizami's genius has few rivals amongst the poets of Iran, his character has even fewer. "He was genuinely pious, yet singularly devoid of fanaticism and intolerance; self-respecting and independent, yet gentle and unostentatious." (39) He was a combination of lofty genius and blameless character unequalled by any other poet.

Nizami was an amalgam of a seer, a philosopher-poet, and a humanist who had firm belief in the fundamental purpose of life which was to ensure the happiness of man through brotherhood of mankind.

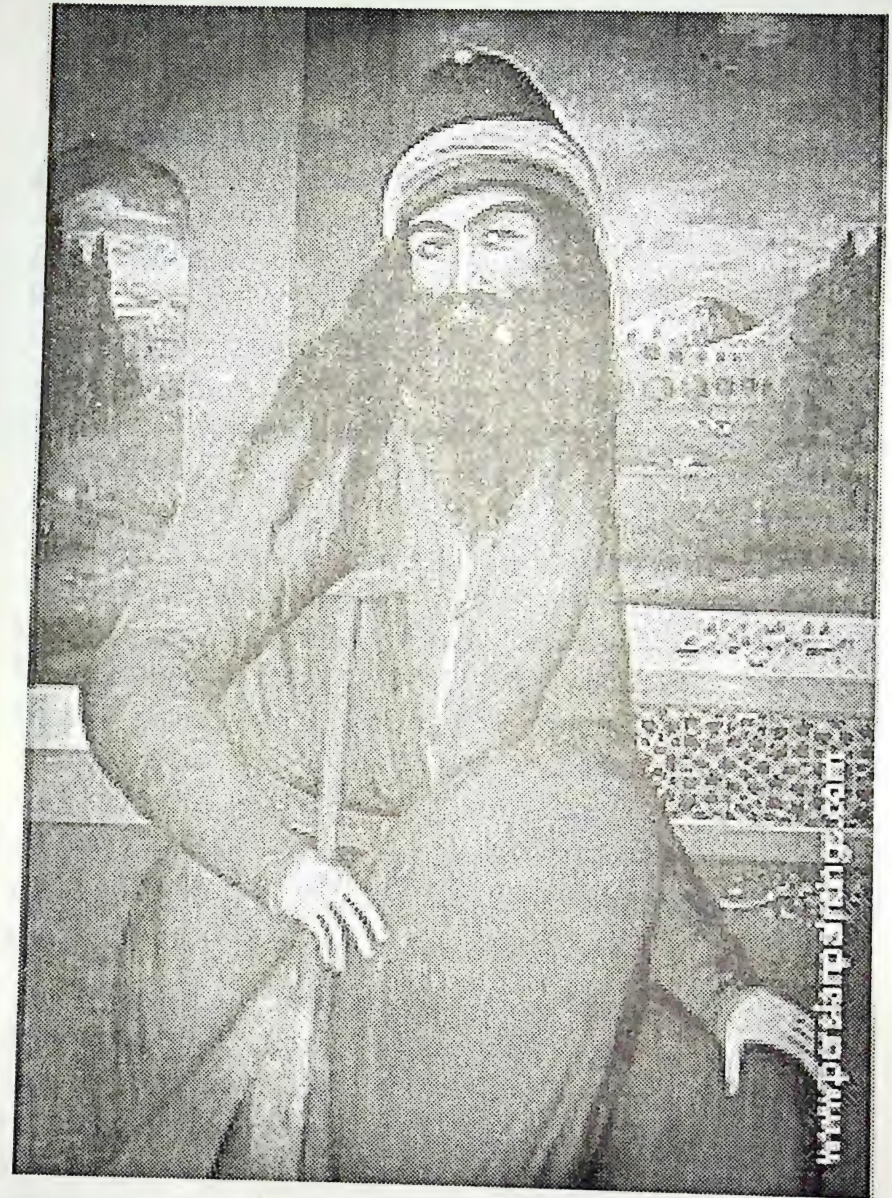
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38. Kaveh Farrokhi is a Lecturer of History in the University of British Columbia since 2004. In support of Ali Doostzadeh he has also written an article "The Politicization of Nezami Ganjavi". It can be read on line.
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FARIDUDDIN ATTAR

**ABU HAMID BIN ABU BAKR IBRAHIM
FARIDUDDIN ATTAR (c 1145 – c 1220) –
PERSIAN POET, SUFI THEORETICIAN AND
HAGIOGRAPHER**

A B S T R A C T

Abu Hamid bin Abu Bakr Ibrahim, better known by his pen-name Fariduddin Attar, was a Persian poet, Sufi, theoretician of mysticism and hagiographer of Nishapur (1) who had immense and lasting influence on Sufism and Persian poetry. He practiced the profession of pharmacy and personally attended to a very large number of customers (2). He was fortunate enough in not depending on his muse for his livelihood and, therefore, he could spurn the art of court eulogist and stayed away from courts. His placid existence as a pharmacist and Sufi enabled him to compose his innumerable significant works, and evidently he started writing books, such as, the *Musibat-Nama* and *Ilahi-Nama*, while at work in his pharmacy. (3) He reached an age of well over seventy and died a violent death at the massacre which the Mongols inflicted on Nishapur in 1221-22. (4)

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Reliable information about Fariduddin Attar's life is rare and scarce. He is mentioned only by two of his contemporaries – Zahiruddin Nasr Muhammad Awfi of Bukhara, who wrote *Lubab al-Albab*, a *Tazkira* of Persian poets, at Uch in the Punjab, in 1221, then ruled by Nasiruddin Qabacha, (5) and Nasiruddin Tusi (d.1273), a polymath, astronomer and mathematician. (6) The next notice of Attar is in Hamdallah Mustawfi's *Tarikh-i-Guzida* which was completed in 1330. (7) In all these early sources Attar is described as a man of Nishapur. According to Faruzanfar, Tusi visited Attar in Nishapur between 1215 and 1221. Attar was then an old man. This would fit in with Awfi's placing of Attar in his chapter on poets of Seljuq period, (8) and that he was living at the time of his writing the book. Faruzanfar has calculated that Attar was born in 1145. (9)

His name, Attar, is a form of the word from which we get 'attar' or 'itr' of roses and indicates a perfume seller, or druggist. He also wrote that he composed some of his poems in his *daru-khana*, which means a drug-store or pharmacy, where he combined the selling of drugs with the practice of medicine.

While Attar's works say little about his life except that in *Mantiq al-Tayr* (Logic of the Birds) where he himself has mentioned the year of its completion as 1177, which appears to be consistent with what is mentioned above. His works tell us that he practiced the profession of pharmacy and personally attended to a very large number of customers.

According to E.G. Browne, Attar spent thirteen years of his childhood by the shrine of the Imam Reza, after that he

travelled extensively, visiting Ray, Kufa, Egypt, Damascus, Mecca, India, and Turkistan, and finally settled once more in his native town of Nishapur (10) In all these places he met Sufi Sheikhs, learned about the *Tariqah*, and experienced life in the *Khanqahs*. For thirty-nine years he busied himself in collecting the verses and sayings of Sufi saints. (11)

It would also appear that Attar was not well known as a poet in his own lifetime, except perhaps at Nishapur. From the second half of the 13th century onwards, Attar's prose work, the *Tazkiratul Auliya*, came to be widely read, but his greatness as a mystic, a poet, and a master of narrative was not discovered until the 15th century. It was then that Attar's career became a matter of interest and was embroidered with fantastic myths, for instance in the biographical works of Jami and Dawlatshah. (12)

Mirza Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab of Qazwin, a Persian scholar of early 20th century, shows by citations from *Khusrow-Nama* and *Asrar-Nama*, the word 'Attar' meaning "the Druggist", indicates that Fariduddin kept a pharmacy, where he was consulted by the patients for whom he prescribed and also made up those prescriptions. Speaking of his poems the *Musibat-Nama* ("The Book of Affliction") and the *Ilahi-Nama*, ("The Divine Book"), the poet himself says that he composed them both in his *Daru-Khana*, or Drug-store, which was frequented by a large number of patients attended by him.

Concerning the particulars of Attar's life, little accurate information is to be gleaned from the biographers. As a result of this, many legends grew about the life of Attar. According to many scholars, even the account of his conversion to Sufism, and the account of his blessing the young Jalaluddin, afterwards the author of the great mystical *mesnavi*, and other stories are

unworthy of any serious attention. (13) In his later years, he lived a very retired life. According to Faruzanafar, Attar met his end at the massacre wrought by the Mongols when they sacked Nishapur in 1221-22. A mausoleum on his remains was built by Ali Sher Nawai in the 16th century.

Attar's initiation into Sufi practices is subject to much speculation and fabrication. Of all the Sufi Sheikhs supposed to have been his teachers, only one Majduddin Baghdadi, a disciple of Najamuddin Kubra, comes within the bounds of possibility. The only certainly in this regard is Attar's own statement in *Tazkiratul Auliya* that he once met him.

ATTAR'S POETRY AND WORKS

Attar speaks of his own poetry in various contexts including the epilogues of his long narrative poems. He confirms the thought likely to be made by every reader of his poems that he possessed an inexhaustible fund of thematic and verbal inspiration. He says that when he composed his poems, many more ideas came into his mind than he could possibly use. (14) He also states that the effort of poetical composition threw him into a state of trance in which he could not sleep. (15)

When Attar boasts of his ability to conceive and express ideas, he generally does so in ways comparable with those of contemporary *qasida* writers such as Khaqani. Like the latter, he is not only convinced that his poetry has far exceeded all previous poetry, but even believes it to be intrinsically unsurpassable at any time in the future, seeing himself as the "seal of speech." This is amply manifested in his *Ilahi-Nama* and *Musibat-Nama*. According to B. Reinert, "Khaqani's claims of finding eternally fresh themes and of subtlety in presenting them reappear in verses by Attar (*Asrar-Nama*, verses 3157 and 3164.). The model for these shared notions of the two poets may have been provided by Sanai." (16)

The number of his works, accordingly to Qazi Nurullah of Shushtar (1549-1610) in his *Majalisul – Mominine*, is equal to the number of *Suras* in the Holy Quran, viz., one-hundred and fourteen; but, this is probably a great exaggeration, since only about thirty are actually preserved, or mentioned by name by him in his own writings. (17)

According to Iraj Bashiri, in an article "Farid al-Din Attar", (18) details of which, incidentally, he has taken from the German Orientalist, Hellmut Ritter, Attar's works fall within three categories, namely –

- i) The first are those works in which mysticism is in perfect balance with a finished, story-teller's art;
- ii) The second group is that in which a pantheistic zeal gains the upper hand over literary interest; and
- iii) The third group is that in which the aging poet idolizes Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib – during this period there is no trace of orderliness in his thoughts or descriptive skills.

Ritter has surmised that the last phase – that of old age, was coincidental with a conversion to Shiaism, (19) but this was effectively and forcefully refuted by Persian scholar Nafisi in 1941, who was able to prove that the works of the third phase in Ritter's classifications were actually written by another Attar who lived about two hundred and fifty years later at Mashhad and was a native of Tus. (20)

According to E.G. Browne, Attar as well as Rumi and Sanai were all Sunni Muslims and their poetry abound with praise for the first two Caliphs: Abu Bakr and Umar ibn al-Khattab. (21) Annemarie Schimmel, another scholar of Persian literature, says that the tendency among Shia authors to include leading mystical poets, such as Rumi and Attar among their own ranks, became stronger after the introduction of Twelver Shia as the state religion in the Safawid period from 1501-1722 (22)

HIS PROSE WORK

Attar's only known prose work which he worked on throughout his life and which was available publicly before his death, is a biography of Muslim saints and mystics under the title of *Tazkirat ul-Auliya*. It starts with Jafar Sadiq (702-765), a prominent Muslim jurist who is revered as an Imam by the adherents of Shia Islam, and as a renowned Islamic scholar and personality by Sunni Muslims, and ends with Manusr al-Hallaj (858-922), whom Attar evidently felt to be the perfecter of Sufism. Altogether there are biographies of about thirty-eight saints and are dedicated to exponents and pioneers of classical Sufism.

Attar has shown a particular interest in the lives of two Sufis, Al-Hallaj and Bistami or "Bayazid", as Attar calls him, whose actual name was Abu Yazid Bistami. Both were representatives of the more extreme, antinomian and, to many of the orthodox, scandalous tendencies of Sufism. Al Hallaj had proclaimed "I am the Truth", for which he was crucified, and Bayazid Bistami had proclaimed: "Glory to Me! How great is my Majesty!" which scandalized the orthodox. Both had attained a state of annihilation in God.

This work gives a kind of hagiographical summary of the ethical and experimental world of the Sufis. In this work, Attar has translated sayings of Sufis, which had come down in Arabic, very faithfully into Persian. Persian scholars find in it as an excellent specimen of Persian prose. (23)

HIS POETIC WORKS

Attar composed several poetic works, main among them are described as follows –

DIWAN

Attar's *Diwan* consists of poems in the *ghazal* (lyric) form. There are a few *qasidas* (panegyrics) which also expound mystic and ethical themes and practical moral precepts. His lyrics also express the same ideas which are elaborated in his epics. The language of Attar in his *ghazals* is very much similar to that of his narrative poetry.

MUKHTAR-NAMA

This is a collection of *rubai's* (quatrains) arranged by subject. This was done by Attar when some of his friends complained of difficulty in finding their way through the labyrinth of verses in the *Diwan*. The themes discussed are on matters of practical morals and general or Sufi ethics, Sufi themes of pantheism, self-effacement, and bewilderment. Mystical and religious subjects are outlined, such as, search for union, sense of uniqueness, distancing from the world, annihilation, amazement, pain, awareness of death. Here typical of lyric poetry of erotic inspiration is adopted – torment of love, beauty of loved one, pangs of separation, etc. In the last chapter, Attar has concluded expressing his hope.

KHUSROW - NAMA

This work stands apart from Attar's other works, as it is not a mystic poems but a courtly romance: being about two lovers named Gul and Hormuz, later renamed Khusrow. This Attar wrote on the basis of a prose work by an otherwise unknown author named by Attar as Badr Ahvazi, which was versified by Attar on the request of a friend. (24)

ASRAR - NAMA

This is also known as the Book of Secrets and is the earliest of Attar's mystical narrative poems; (25) it has attracted less scholarly attention than other three. The contents in this book are arranged in twenty-two discourses (*maqala*) in random order. Its concluding message is the hope of release of man's spiritual substance from the world's grasp. In no other work does Attar propound the Gnostic concept of the soul's fall and the duty to free it from worldly and material bonds so comprehensively and forcefully as in this work. (26) The resultant belief that this work influenced the preamble to *Mesnavi-i-Ma'anvi* of Rumi gave rise to the legend that aged Attar gifted a copy of it to young Jalaluddin as his testament.

The concluding message naturally leads the author into moralizing reflections of the world's transience, vanity, and depravity, which fill chapters in the last third of this narrative.

MANTIQ AL-TAYR

The *Mantiq al-Tayr*, or the Logic of Birds, has a frame-story, inspired by the *Risalat al-Tayer* of Ahmad, or his brother Muhammad Ghazali, which combines two well-known themes: the assembly of birds to choose the worthiest of them as their leader, and the journey of the birds to the distant seat of the bird-king, Simurgh. Faruzanafar, in *Sharah-i-Ahwal*, has traced the second theme to the *Risalat al-Tayr* of Ibn Sina (Avicenna)(27)

The *Mantiq al-Tayr* is an allegorical poem of something over 4600 couplets. Its subject is the quest of the birds for the mythical king Simurgh. The birds typify the Sufi pilgrims, and Simurgh – God, "the Truth". The narrative portion begins after verse 593 and is comprised in 45 "Discourses" (*Maqala*) and a "Conclusion" (*Khatima*). (28) It opens with an account of assembly of birds where they decide to have a leader for successful pursuit of their quest and elect Hoopoe (*Hudhud*). No sooner has the quest been decided upon than the birds "begin with one accord to make excuses." Browne has described this very well thus – "The nightingale pleads its love for the rose; the parrot excuses itself on the ground that it is imprisoned for its beauty in a cage; the peacock affects diffidence to its worthiness because of its connection with Adam's expulsion from Paradise; the duck cannot dispense with water; the partridge is too much attached to the mountains, the heron to the lagoons, and the owl to the ruins which these birds respectively frequent; the *Huma* loves its power of conferring royalty; the falcon will not relinquish its place of honour on the King's hand; while the wagtail pleads its weakness. All these excuses, typical of the excuses made by men for not pursuing the things of the Spirit, are answered in turn by the wise Hoopoe, which illustrates its arguments by a series of anecdotes." (29)

The birds acknowledge Simurgh as their king and, smitten with desire to see him, they decide to set out for his far away palace. The quest takes birds minus twenty two who had expressed excuses through seven valleys, which are described as follows –

1. The Valley of Quest or Search
2. The Valley of Love
3. The Valley of Understanding and Knowledge
4. The Valley of Independence and Detachment
5. The Valley of Unity
6. The Valley of Astonishment and Bewilderment
7. The Valley of Deprivation and Annihilation.

While passing through these valleys, they are purged of all self and purified by their trials, find the Simurgh, and in finding it, find themselves. This is nothing else but the path followed by the Sufis for Annihilations in God, or *Fana Fillah*. In this narrative the Hudhud, or hoopoe, is the moving spirit of the whole enterprise and Attar has very effectively and convincingly interwoven numerous tales and anecdotes into the frame-story. It is out and out a Sufi allegory. It is something akin to the stages of spiritual attainment on the pilgrim's progress to God which are the result of the mystic's personal efforts and endeavours.

MUSIBAT-NAMA

The *Musibat-Nama*, or the Book of Afflictions, expounds a basic frame of Attar's thought on the inner restlessness and bewilderment from which deliverance is attainable on the Sufi path. In this work, Attar has explicitly insisted on the necessity of guidance by a master. The person who gains experiences is a *Salik* guided by a master, or *Murshid*. Attar identifies the *Salik* with the ideal mystic and relates this ideal to remembrance of God. Mystical experiences in the privacy of vigil form the background of this work, as the forty stages traversed by the *Salik* in this work correspond to forty days of religious vigil, commonly known in Sufi parlance as *Chilla*.

ILAH-I-NAMA

The *Ilahi-Nama*, or the Divine Book, owes its name to the poet's intention to open the "door to the divine treasure" – *dar-i-ganj-i-Ilahi*. (30) The frame-work of the story tells of a ruler who has six sons and each one expresses his heart's desire. The matter is discussed with each son's desires with him and explained to each one of them that each one is capable of fulfillment of desire within himself. The sons are shown the temporary and senseless desires which are combated with spiritual anecdotes. A wealth of edifying anecdotal material is fitted into the frame story. In substance, the *Ilahi-Nama* conveys the same message as the *Mantiq al-Tayr*, that is, the goal man seeks is latent within himself.

PAND-NAMA

The *Pand-Nama*, or the Book of Counsels, is a small *mesnavi* filled with maxims of conduct. (31) It is a dry moral rule-book in a simple language. This work has won great popularity, particularly among the Turks in Turkey. (32)

TEACHINGS OF ATTAR

The thoughts depicted in Attar's works reflect the whole evolution of the Sufi movement. The starting point is the idea that the body – bound soul's awaited release and return to its source in the other world can be experienced during the present life in mystic union attainable through inward purification. In further explaining his thoughts, Attar not only uses material specifically from Sufic sources, but also from older ascetic legacies. His heroes for most part are Sufis and ascetics, but he also introduces stories from historical chronicles, collection of anecdotes, and all types of other high-esteemed literature. Therefore, his works can be considered of immense value as sources on the hagiology and phenomenology of Sufism.

Attar came to be regarded as one of the most famous mystic poets of Iran. His works were the inspiration of Jalaluddin Rumi and many another mystic poet. Attar along with Sanai were two of the greatest influence on Rumi in his Sufic views. Rumi has mentioned both of them with the highest esteem several times in his poetry.

ESTIMATE

From his poetic compositions, it is clear that certain of the beliefs central to Sufism engaged Attar's imagination more than others. Sufism, propounded by the mystics of Islam, had permeated Neo-Persian right from its re-emergence in the ninth century A.D.

A poet of the generation before Attar, Sanai, who died in 1150 when Attar was a child, in his *Hadiqatul-Haqiqah* (The Garden of the Truth), had expounded the Sufi doctrine in which he had mixed a great deal of extraneous matter. Attar, on the contrary, had diffused in his poetry two themes of Sufism in particular: the necessity for destroying the Self, and the importance of passionate Love to achieve the goal of Sufism, that is, annihilation in God. Both these themes are mentioned in every conceivable context in the scheme.

The *Hadiqatul-Haqiqah* of Sanai is quite significant as being the first of the three famous long narrative Persian poems written in couplets which expound Sufi teachings – the other two are: Attar's *Mantiq al-Tayr* and Rumi's *Mesnavi-i-Ma'navi*. Sanai's work is by far the least popular of the three and primarily owes its fame to chronological pre-eminence rather than intrinsic excellence.

If we compare Sanai's work with Attar's, Sanai's is undeniably patchy and dull. Attar's great advance on Sanai's beginning was to present Sufi doctrine in an extended allegorical form which gives the poem a convincingly unfolded structure; Attar transforms a belief into poetry.

It is a travesty of facts that ever since Rumi, who has composed *Mesnavi-i-Ma'navi* which is acclaimed as "Quran written in Persian language", and other works in Persian, is

claimed by Turkey, there has been a tendency among the scholars in Iran, obviously for nationalistic consideration, to declare Fariduddin Attar as the greatest Sufi poet in Persian. (33)

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Maulana Rumi

MAULANA JALALUDDIN MUHAMMAD RUMI (1207-1273):

THE GREATEST MYSTICAL POET OF PERSIAN

ABSTRACT

In the history of mankind many luminous stars have embellished the spiritual firmament one amongst them has been Maulana Jalaluddin Muhammad Balkhi, more popularly known as Maulana Jalaluddin Muhammad Rumi, or just Rumi, who was a thirteenth century persian poet (1) Jurist, theologian and Sufi mystic. (2) Iranians, Turks, Afghans, Tajiks, other Central Asian Muslims, as well as the Muslims of the Indian sub-continent, have greatly appreciated his spiritual legacy for nearly eight centuries (3) Rumi's importance is considered to transcend national and ethnic borders. His poems have been widely translated into many of the world's languages and transposed into various formats. In 2007, when his eight hundredth birth anniversary was celebrated, he was described as the "most popular poet in America". (4)

Maulana Rumi's works are primarily written in Persian and his *mesnavi* remains one of the purest, literary glories of Iran and of the Persian language. (5) The Persian renaissance in the form of Neo-Persian appeared in the ninth century along with the development of Sufism (6) in the regions of Seistan, Khurasan, and Transoxiana, and by the eleventh century, it reinforced the Persian language as the preferred cultural and literary language of the Persian speaking world. His original works are widely read today in Persian speaking world. His poetry has greatly influenced Persian literature, as well as Turkish, Urdu, Punjabi, Sindhi and other Indian languages, especially those written in Perso-Arabic script, for example, Pashto, Punjabi, Sindhi, Kashmiri etc.

Maulana Rumi heralded the cause of Sufism at a time when the Mongol hordes wreaked havoc in Asia and people were groping in the dark and striving arduously in search of the truth and its realization (8) His personal experience of this truth inspired the great mystical revival in Iran and the Anatolian Peninsula. He was acclaimed as the resuscitator of the dormant Divinity of man by realizing which humanity throughout the world could be brought into the orbit of one family of God. He delivered a message of hope, love, faith, brotherhood, fellowship amity, understanding, peace and charity throughout the world" (9) *Hamma doost*, "all are friends" was the necessary consequence of *Hama U-st*, "all is He."

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Jalaluddin Muhammad, widely known by his sobriquet Maulana in Iran, Afghanistan and Indian sub-continent, and popularly known as Mevlana in Turkey, was born on 30th September, 1207 to Bahauddin Walad of Balkh, a theologian, a jurist and a mystic who was a well-established scholar. Because of his erudition, followers of Bahauddin referred to him as '*Sultan al-Ulema*' – the Sultan of Scholars. (10) The popular hagiographical assertions that have claimed the family descent from the Caliph Abu Bakr do not hold on closer scrutiny, according to some scholars. (11) Similarly, the claim of maternal descent from Khwarizmshah for Rumi, or his father, is seen as a non-historical hagiographical tradition only to connect the family with royalty. (12)

In 1219, a year before Mongols invaded Balkh, with a band of about forty followers and his whole family, Bahauddin set out westwards. (13) At the time of flight from Balkh Jalaluddin was a boy of twelve, already well-grounded in his father's learning and piety, "old enough to remember in after years his childhood environments, reminiscences of which are to be found scattered here and there in his poetry and discourses." (14)

Bahauddin had three children, the eldest of them was a daughter, then Alauddin, a son two years older to Jalaluddin who was the youngest child. Bahauddin made his way first to Nishapur, all too soon to share the horrible fate of Balkh, and there he called upon the venerable poet and mystic Fariduddin Attar. According to hagiographical account, it was at Nishapur that Fariduddin recognizing in young Jalaluddin the signs of spiritual greatness gave to Jalaluddin a copy of his *Asrar-Nameh* or "the Book of Secrets". The book is about the entanglement

of the soul in the material world. This meeting had a deep impact on the young boy of about fourteen and the book, later on, proved to be a great source of inspiration for his great work. (15)

From Nishapur Bahauddin Walad went to Baghdad, meeting many scholars and Sufis there. (16) From Baghdad they went to perform Hajj. The rites of the pilgrimage duly completed, Bahauddin now led his spiritually refreshed party to Damascus, and next to Malatya, Erzincan, Sivas and Nigde. They finally settled in Karaman where Rumi's mother and brother both died. In 1225, when Jalaluddin was eighteen years old, he was married to Gauhar Khatun, daughter of Lala Sharfuddin, presumably a member of the fugitive party. To this union two sons were born Alauddin and Bahauddin Sultan Walad. It was Bahauddin Sultan Walad, who would later compose a poetical biography of his father and, in all possibility, edited his scattered discourses. (17)

In 1228, because of the insistent invitation of Alauddin Kai-Qobad, ruler of Anatolia, also known as Rum, Bahauddin came and finally settled in Konya where he took up an honorable appointment of a preacher and a teacher. On the death of his father in 1231, Rumi, aged twentyfive, inherited his position as the Islamic Maulavi. One of Bahauddin's students, Sayed Burhanuddin Muhaqqiq Tarmizi, also known as *Sirrdan* (Secret-knower), continued to train Rumi in *Shariah* and *Tariqa*, especially that of Rumi's father. For nine years Rumi practiced Sufism as a disciple of Burhanuddin until the latter's death in 1240. During part of these years of Sufi discipleship, Sayed Burhanuddin directed Rumi to go to Syria and master the traditional Islamic domains of knowledge. He first went to Aleppo and studied at the *Madrasa-i-Halawiyya*. After completing his studies he returned to Konya where he was

asked to observe several forty-day spiritual retreats (*Chilla*), in pursuance of Sufi practices.

Rumi's public life then began from 1240: he became an Islamic jurist, issuing *fatwas*, and giving sermons in the mosque at Koniya. He also served as Maulavi in the *madrassa*. During this period Rumi also travelled to Damascus. On his return from Damascus, Jalaluddin's reputation for learning and sanctity became very great and he became a leading theologian in Koniya.

It was his meeting with the wandering mendicant Shamsuddin Tebrizi in 1244 that completely changed his life. From an accomplished teacher and jurist, Rumi was transformed into an ascetic. Shams had travelled throughout the Middle East looking out for someone who could "endure my company" and found in Jalaluddin Rumi that person. According to R.A. Nicholson, Jalaluddin Rumi found in Shams Tabrizi that perfect image of the Divine Beloved. (18) For a number of years both of them remained inseparable. Their close relationship was greatly resented by Rumi's disciples. In 1248, Rumi and Shams were talking, Shams was called to the back door. He went out never to be seen again. Rumi's love for, and his separation from him, found expression in outpouring of lyrics which are included in *Diwan-i-Shams-i-Tabriz*. He himself went out searching for Shams and not finding him realized :

Why should I seek? I am the same as

He. His essence speaks through me.

I have been looking for myself. (19)

According to William C. Chittick "Separation from Shams was but the appearance; separation from the Divine Beloved was the reality." (20) When Shams disappeared

permanently, Rumi became more profoundly creative than ever before as a mystical poet.

After Shams Tabrizi, Rumi found another companion in Salahuddin Faridun *Zar-kub*, a goldsmith. On the death of Salahuddin in 1261, Rumi's scribe and favourite student, Hussamuddin Hasan, assumed the role of Rumi's companion. For years these two spiritual friends worked together as Superior and Assistant. It was Hussam to whom the famous *Mesnavi*, written by Jalaluddin Rumi, was dedicated and it was his encouragement and suggestion which greatly inspired Rumi to write the great poem, which is also known as *Hussam-nameh*. After completion of six volumes of the *Mesnavi* Rumi retired from this world leaving Hussam as his successor in the Order of Dervishes. On 17th December, 1273, Rumi passed away and his body was buried beside that of his father in Koniya and a splendid shrine was built with Blue Dome known as *Qubba-i-Khazra* which has now become a place of pilgrimage for the devotees of the Maulana.

Rumi's doctrine advocates tolerance, positive reasoning, goodness, charity and awareness through love. To him all religions were truth. His peaceful teachings have appealed to people of all sects and creeds. He is hailed as the greatest mystical poet of Islam.

RUMI'S MAJOR WORKS

Rumi's works are divided into two parts, viz., poetic works and prose works. His poetry is often divided into various categories, such as, the quatrains (*rubaiyat*) and odes (*ghazals*) of the *Diwan*, and the six volumes of the *mesnavi*. His prose works are divided into: The Discourses, the Letters, and the Seven Sermons.

HIS POETIC WORKS:

MESNAVI OF RUMI:

Great work of Jalaluddin Rumi in Persian is known as *Mesnavi-i-Ma'navi*, or Spiritual Couplets, composed of over twenty-six thousands verses and is divided into six books. It is an epic literature and has been acclaimed as the complete scripture of Sufism. The Persian poet Jami (1414-1492) hailed it as –

Mesnavi-i-Ma'navi-i-Maulavi

Hast Quran dar Zaban-i-Pahlavi

(Tr.) The profound 'Mesnavi' of Maulavi Rumi

Is the Quran composed in the language of Iran) (21)

Even Sir Muhammad Iqbal (1873-1938), a famous and great poet of Persian and Urdu of the sub-continent, has said about the Mesnavi of Maulana Rumi –

Ke u ba harfe Pahlavi, Quran Navisht

(Tr.) (He wrote the Quran in the Persian tongue) (22)

In the *mesnavi*, Rumi weaves fables, scenes from everyday life, Quranic revelations and exegesis, and metaphysics into a vast and intricate tapestry. His expressions are pregnant with significance, his thoughts are profound and subtle. His words are simple but the ideas are sometimes so inscrutable as to be hard to comprehend without the help of a commentary. (23) Any one looking through the *mesnavi*, at random, can also see that its doctrines, interwoven with apologues, anecdotes, legends and traditions, range over the whole domain of medieval religious life and thought. The *mesnavi* is the expression of

peaceful devotions and profound philosophy in sublime poetry. It is a wonderful encyclopaedia of Sufic tales and discourses. In many a place Rumi has tried to simplify the poem with the help of fables and illustrations for easy comprehension. "Rumi was especially indebted, as he freely acknowledges in the course of his poem, to two earlier mystic poets: Sanai of Ghazna and Fariduddin Attar of Nishapur". (24)

According to R.A. Nicholson, in *Rumi: Poet And Mystic*, "Rumi wrote in the ecstatic mood and therefore his work is analogous to what is called "automatic writing." That is why such poetry can communicate to us the same rapture as it did to the writer himself, especially when accompanied by music, as is customary among Sufis engaged in 'Zikr'. The author is himself, at that point of time, at the mercy of his ecstatic inspiration and is himself unable to explain the meaning of his verse."

In a critical analysis, it can be said, while the language of love and wine is common to all the Persian mystical poets, Maulana Rumi stands out supreme in this convention and technique for inventiveness of imagery and fertility of allusion. The vast poem of Rumi expresses the spirit of Persian mysticism with a power and insight that have never been equalled. Persian poet Jami (1414-1492) has paid the following rare tribute to Maulana Rumi –

Man che goyam wasf-i-an ali janab ?

Neest paighamber wali darad kitab

(Tr.) How can I describe the qualities of this great master ?

He is not a prophet, yet he possesses the Book (of divine revelations).

In fine, the *mesnavi* of Rumi occupies the topmost summit in the mountain range of Sufic poetry in Persian and is the foremost representative of didactic poetry in all of Persian literature.

DIWAN-I-SHAMS-I-TABRIZ:

Jalaluddin Rumi is also the author of *Diwan-i-Shams-i-Tabriz* also known as *Diwan-i-Kabir* (Great Work), which is dedicated to his spiritual preceptor, Shams Tabrizi. In the *Diwan* we find the best specimen of Sufic lyrics replete with truths of spirituality expressed in simple and forceful language. The lyrics number about two thousands five hundred and relate the cardinal philosophy of Sufism and are scalable only by the highly developed and disciplined Sufis. There is a divine rapture running through the lyrics and those who are well-versed in Sufism can derive ecstasy from them. (25)

The *Diwan* contains ninty *ghazals* and nineteen quatrains in Arabic, (26) a couple of dozen or so couplets in Turkish (27), and fourteen couplets in Greek. (28)

In the *Diwan*, Jalaluddin's lyric poetry in Persian is the consummate expression either of some supreme moment in his life, or of some rapturous mood, and it recalls to his reader similar experiences in their own lives. Rumi sings essentially of life. This gives to his poetry the essential unity of theme. By advocating a life of ceaseless activity, and discountenancing all those views of life which advocate renunciation, as mystics in general were wont to do, he widened the scope of his lyric poetry. His philosophy of life envisages glorious destiny for mankind. Many a Sufi-poet has derived inspiration from these verses and achieved salvation by transcending all barriers which impede his progress to realization.

HIS PROSE WORKS

FIHI MA FIHI:

Rumi is the author of a treatise, in prose, entitled *Fihi Ma Fihi* – literally meaning “In it what’s in It.” This is a quotation from a poem of the mystic – philosopher Ibn al-Arabi which has been explained by some scholars as meaning : “There is, to be found in *this* book what is contained in *that* book, this is, the *Mesnavi*.” This is a record of seventy-one talks given by Rumi on various occasions to his disciples. It was compiled from the notes of his various disciples, so Rumi did not author the work directly. (29) The greater part of this treatise is addressed to Muinudddin, the *Parwana* of Rum. These sayings and discourses numbering seventyone “are the quintessential utterances and contain deep moral lessons, gems of wisdom and hidden advices which form the ethos of Maulana Rumi’s mysticism and his philosophy of life and urge patience, humility, hospitality, generosity, amity, understanding, gratitude and love for the Divine Beloved.” (30), These have now been translated into English by A.J. Arberry, who has based his translations on the authoritative annotations made by Badi al-Zaman Furuzanafar in his Tehran edition of 1952, under the title of *Discourses of Rumi* (1961). According to Rumi’s biographer Franklin D. Lewis, the style of the *Fihi Ma Fihi* are colloquial and are meant for middle-class men and women and lack the sophisticated wordplay. (31)

MAJALES-I-SAB'A:

These are seven Persian sermons, as the name suggests, or lectures given in seven different assemblies. These sermons give a commentary on the deeper meaning of Quran and Hadis. The sermons also contain quotations from Sanai, Attar, and

other poets, including Rumi himself. According to Aflaki, Rumi delivered these sermons on the request of notables, especially Salahuddin Faridun Zar-kub. These sermons show Rumi's knowledge in the Islamic sciences. His style is the typical of the genre of lectures given by Sufis and other spiritual teachers. (32)

MAKATIB:

These are Rumi's letters in Persian addressed to his disciples, family members, and men of state and influence. The style of the letters is highly sophisticated and epistolary, which is in conformity with the expectations of correspondence directed to nobles, statesmen and kings. (33)

RUMI'S PHILOSOPHICAL OUTLOOK

Rumi was an evolutionary thinker. He believed that the spirit after devolution from the Divine Ego undergoes an evolutionary process by which it comes back to the same Divine Ego. (34) All matter in the universe obeys this law and this movement is due to inbuilt urge which according to him is "love", to evolve and seek enjoinder with the Divinity from which it has emerged. This is very much akin to French philosopher Henri Bergson's idea of life being creative and evolutionary.

The most important and the central theme of Rumi's philosophy is the problem of Personality, Divine and Human, and their inter-relationship. This again sub-divides into philosophical problems such as, the Nature of Soul, Creation, Evolution, Mysticism, Love, Freedom, Perfect Man, Survival of Personality, God and His relation to this world. (35)

Rumi's philosophy brings spiritual awakening, hope and cheer to humanity caught up by its own selfishness, greed, envy,

insincerity, pride and passion for aggrandizement. He has shown the way how one can live with fellow beings in peace, tranquility, understanding, happiness and harmony.

RUMI'S LEGACY

To the modern age, especially to the modern Westerners, Rumi's teachings are one of the best introductions to the philosophy and practice of Sufism. Many Orientalists such as Nicholson, Franklin D. Lewis, Annemarie Schimmel, Arberry, among others, have been instrumental in spreading Rumi's legacy in the English-speaking parts of the world. Even modern renowned Persian poet of the sub-continent, Sir Muhammad Iqbal, inspired by the works of Rumi, referred to him as his spiritual leader and guide.

Rumi's works have been translated into many of the world's languages, including Russian, German, Urdu, Turkish, Arabic, Bengali, French, Italian, and Spanish, and are being presented in a growing number of formats, including concerts, workshops, readings, and other artistic creations.

TEACHINGS OF RUMI

The poetry of Rumi shows him an eloquent and enthusiastic teacher explaining the way to God for the benefit of those who seek union with the Ultimate Reality. A detailed study of his *mesnavi* is necessary because he has left no problem of philosophy or religion untouched. Since his thoughts have not been developed in a systematic way, but are lying scattered, it has made this task bit difficult. In brevity, the main themes discussed by him in his *mesnavi* are in respect of God, Emanation of One Being, Nature of the Soul, Tauhid, Love, Mysticism, Annihilation of the Self, Good and Evil, Action, Service to Mankind, Negation of Rituals, Guide or Murshid.

Rumi believed passionately in the use of music, poetry and dance as a path for reaching God. He encouraged *Sama* which, he felt, represents a mystical journey of spiritual ascent through mind and love to the Perfect One. In this journey, the seeker symbolically turns towards the truth, grows through love, finds the truth and arrives at the Perfect. The seeker then returns from this spiritual journey, with greater maturity, to love and to be of service to the whole of creation without discrimination with regard to beliefs, races, classes and nations.

UNIVERSALITY OF RUMI

It is often said that teachings of Rumi are ecumenical in nature. (36) For Rumi, religion was mostly a personal experience and not limited to logical arguments or perceptions of the senses. Creative love, or the urge to rejoin the spirit to divinity, was the goal towards which everything moves. The dignity of human life was important. (37) Rumi, in spite of being a devout Muslim was a proponent of non-denominational spirituality. Rumi envisioned a universal faith, embodying all religions, because he understood that the cause of every religious conflict is ignorance. According to him religiosity consists in something other than outward religions. Real belief is apparent only on the inside of a person, which is not visible. He strongly believed in the religion of love which involves loving eternal and invisible source of existence.

According to Majid M. Naini, "Rumi's life and transformation provide true testimony and proof that people of all religions and backgrounds can live together in peace and harmony. Rumi's visions, words, and life teach us how to reach inner peace and happiness so we can finally stop the continual stream of hostility and hatred and achieve true global peace and harmony." (38)

MEVLEVI SUFI ORDER

Rumi was a true Sufi and used to have many spiritual visions and was transported into ecstasy. He was providentially endowed with a very rare combination of high spirituality and rich poetic genius. He was particularly fascinated by the idea of rotation. All natural phenomena came within the gamut of his imagery.

The special Maulavi, Turkish Mevlavi, Order of Derveshes is said to have been instituted by Rumi in 1248 when his friend, associate and spiritual mentor, Shamsuddin Tabrizi, left to be heard no more. The special dress of the derveshes which, according to Aflaki, is the Indian garb of mourning, was instituted by the Founder in memory of his spiritual guide Shams Tabrizi. (39)

The Mevlevi Derveshes make use of different kinds of musical instruments. Singing and dancing form a feature of their public services of worship and commemoration. (40) Regarding instituting the musical and dancing service in his Order, Rumi himself is said to have related that when he perceived that the people at large of Rum (Anatoliya) had no inclination for the practice of religious austerities, no striving for a knowledge of the divine mysteries, he thought of bringing to use poetical exhortation and musical service and he devised the entire exercise of music and dance. (41) This was greatly appreciated and participated by the people of Rum.

Rumi was particularly fascinated by the idea of rotation. To him dancing and music, the whirling movements of the Derveshes, all have special mystic meanings. The most characteristic feature of the Order is the celebrated Whirling Dance. This dance is performed in a ceremony called *Zikr*, the term originally meaning 'remembrance' of God. The purpose

of this is, apart from its devotional aspect, the procuring of ecstatic experience. (42) It is also a pleasant social occasion, and serves to knit together the heterogeneous attending it.

The Derseshes of the Order even now continue to dance the way they used to do – round and round in circles to the beat of drums and notes of the flute. It is indeed a spectacular sight. (43)

CONCLUSION

I conclude on an optimistic note that, with great advancement in communication, information technology and tremendous scientific development, people of different ethnic and religious thought are coming into ever closer proximity. Globalization is inevitable. With globalization taking place we would need a new vision of the World Order with a deeper understanding and appreciation of all people, their civilization, their cultures, especially their moral and spiritual achievements. For this purpose, among other things, Maulana Rumi's works, teachings and philosophy can provide us a great source of inspiration. (44)

The need of the modern age is to remove the misunderstanding and non-essential superficial forms of religion by breaking the artificial barriers and to flow together in harmony. Taking a cue from Maulana Rumi's dictum: "While beliefs vary from place to place faith is essentially the same", people from various religions and cultures can effectively work for this great cause for the general good of mankind.

It is no wonder that interest in the mysticism and Sufistic teachings of Maulana Rumi is once again gathering momentum throughout the world and, hopefully, his teachings and philosophy of life are going to play a very vital and significant role in the envisioned new World Order. (45)

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SA'DI SHIRAZI

**ABU MUHAMMAD MASLIHUDDIN BIN ABDULLAH
SA'DI SHIRAZI:**

PERSIAN POET OF QUINTESSENTIAL WISDOM

ABSTRACT

No Persian poet or writer enjoys to this day, not even in his own country, but wherever his language is cultivated, a wider celebrity status or a greater reputation than Sheikh Sa'di of Shiraz. His *Gulistan*, or "Rose-Garden", and *Bostan*, or "Orchard", are usually the first classics to which students of Persian are introduced. His *ghazals* (lyrics) are among the best in Persian literature and also enjoy a great popularity but second only to the *ghazals* of Hafiz Shirazi. His poetry is popular mainly for world wisdom rather than mysticism, and his prose work the *Gulistan*, interspersed profusely with verses, is considered as the quintessence of wisdom and one of the most Machiavellian works in Persian language. (1) He is a poet who represents on the whole "the astute, half-pious, half-worldly side of the Persian character" (2) According to the lovers of the writings of Sa'di, in the whole Persian literature if there is any delineator of life who comes closer to the greatness of Shakespeare in English, it is him. (3)

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

A native of Shiraz, his full name was Abu Muhammad Maslihuddin bin Abdullah. (4) Like other Iranian Persian poets who did not belong to the higher echelons of society, in the medieval period, often socially obscure, were completely ignored by contemporary historians. It was only later on when their work and merit were appreciated that a few anecdotes were strung together and their early lives were described. Sa'di Shirazi also fell into this category. There are different years of his

birth, viz., 1184, 1195 and now, by some scholars, 1208. (5) Be that as it may, let us begin by assuming that Sa'di was born in Shiraz around 1200 and died in or around 1292 also in Shiraz. (6)

Little authentic is known about the formative period of Sa'di's life other than that his father Abdullah was a religious man. When Sa'di was about eleven, his father died which is proved by a passage in the *Bostan*. (7)

On the death of Sa'di's father the family came under the protection of his uncle who had some business in Shiraz. He spent his youth in relative poverty. On the completion of his elementary education in Shiraz which, incidentally, coincided with the devastation of Islamic educational and cultural centres of Khujand, Samarqand and Bukhara, at the hands of Mongol Chingiz Khan. In those turbulent times, Sa'di left Shiraz for Baghdad where he joined the celebrated Nizamiyya College. Historians divide Sa'di's life into three parts as follows –

- i) The first period of twenty-five years, or the period of study upto 1226, a which he spent chiefly at Baghdad.
- ii) The second period of his life, from 1226 to 1256, when he went on long oddyseys to different lands of Islam and other countries.
- iii) The third period commencing from 1256 to the end of his life in 1292 in Shiraz which also marks the period of his literary activities.

FIRST PERIOD OF SA'DI'S LIFE :

The first period of his life from his birth to 1226, which is designated as period of schooling and studies, bulk of which he spent in Baghdad, he excelled in the study of Islamic sciences,

Islamic law, jurisprudence, governance, history, Arabic literature and Islamic theology.

While at Baghdad, Sa'di is said to have come under the influence of the eminent Sufi Sheikh Shihabuddin Suhrawardy (d.1234), "of whose piety and unselfish love of his fellow-creatures Sa'di speaks in one of the anecdotes in the *Bostan*." (8)

In another anecdote, Sa'di has mentioned that he had greatly profited from the instructions received from another eminent personages in Baghdad, Ibnul Jawzi (d.1258), grandson of the great Hanabali scholar, Shamsuddin Abul Faraj Ibnul Jawzi (9) (1115-1201), who belonged to the Hanabali school of jurisprudential thoughts. This is mentioned in one of the anecdotes of Book ii of the *Gulistan*.

After completing his studies in Baghdad he returned to Shiraz.

SECOND PERIOD OF SA'DI'S LIFE :

The second period of Sa'di's life commenced in 1226 which consisted of about thirty years, and is designated as period of his odyssey, to Islamic countries and other far flung areas.

In the wake of Mongol invasion of the Muslim world, especially Khwarizm and Iran, Sa'di like many Muslim *ulema*, divines, scholars, poets and writers, was displaced and, in the turbulence that followed in Fars, led him to quit Shiraz and wander all over the Islamic world. With regard to his departure from Shiraz, Sa'di alludes in the following verse in the Preface to the *Gulistan*:

"O knowest thou not why, an outcast and exile

In lands of the stranger a refuge I sought ?

Disarranged was the world like the hair of a negro

When I fled from the Turks and the terror they brought." (10)

During his long odysseys of about thirty years, Sa'di visited Anatolian Peninsula, where he visited the port of Adana near Koniya (Iconium); he went to Syria and took refuge in Damascus, where he witnessed the famine in one of the most affluent cities of the world; in Arabia Yemen and Hijaz, and other places; he went to Egypt, ruled by Sultan Baibars, and mentions about Qazis and Muftis of Al-Azhar, grand bazaar, music and art of Cairo; he went to Abyssinia and some other places in North Africa; he visited Balkh and Ghazna in Afghanistan; and came to the Punjab, Sindh, Somnath in Gujarat in India. (11)

In his wanderings, Sa'di travelled like a true dervish in all sorts of ways, and mixed with all sorts of people. E.G. Browne writes, "..... he appears now painfully stumbling after the Pilgrim Caravan through the burning deserts of Arabia, now bandying jests with a fine technical flavour of grammatical terminology with school boys at Kashghar, now a prisoner in the hands of Franks, condemned to hard labour in the company of Jews in the Syrian town of Tripoli, now engaged in investigating the mechanism of a wonder working Hindoo idol in the Temple of Somnath, and saving his life by killing the custodian who discovered him engaged in this pursuit." (12)

In an article "Shaykh Muslish al-Din Sa'di Shirazi" Iraj Bashiri writes, ".....Sa'di mingled with the ordinary survivors of the Mongol holocaust. He sat in remote teahouses late into the night and exchanged views with merchants, farmers, preachers, wayfarers, thieves, and Sufi mendicants. For twenty years

or more, he continued the same schedule of preaching, advising, learning, honing his sermons, and polishing them into gems illuminating the wisdom and foibles of his people.” (13)

Sa’di’s extensive travels and meeting with diverse people broadened his outlook and acquainted him with details of marvellous adventures, the vicissitudes of life, conversation of enlightened sages, the acquisition of sciences and knowledge, made him a universal man.

THIRD PERIOD OF SA’DI’S LIFE :

In 1256, after his long odysseys, Sa’di returned to Shiraz. The period of 1256 to 1292 marks the third period of his life and is designated as the period of his literary activities. When Sa’di returned to his home-town Shiraz, it was ruled by Atabek Abu Bakr Sa’d ibn Zangi (1231-60), who had purchased peace with the Mongols and the town was enjoying an era of relative tranquility. Sa’di confirms this in his Preface to the *Gulistan* :

At peace was the land when again I beheld it
E’en lions and leopards were wild but in name.
Like that was my country what time I forsook it,
Fulfilled with confusion and terror and shame:
Like this in the time of ‘Bu Bakr the Atabek
I found it when back from my exile I came. (14)

Not only Sa’di was welcomed to the city but was respected highly by the ruler and enumerated among the great of the province. It is said, in response, Sa’di composed some of his best *Qasidas* (panegyric odes) as a gesture of gratitude which he placed at the beginning of his poetic composition the *Bostan*. According to Dowlatshah, the pen-name Sa’di, signifying felicity or fortunate, was given to him by Atabek Abu Bakr Sa’d ibn Zangi. (15)

A year after returning to Shiraz, in 1257, Sa’di published his celebrated *mesnavi* poem the *Bostan* (Orchard) which is an exquisite piece of didacted poetry and dedicated to Atabek Abu Bakr Sa’d ibn Zangi. A year later, that is in 1258, he wrote and published his celebrated work in prose profusely interspersed with short poems the *Gulistan* (The Rose Garden), which is also dedicated to Atabek Abu Bakr Sa’d ibn Zangi.

After 1259, Sa’di seems to have gone into retirement and we do not hear about him anymore. It would appear that he spent remainder of his life, until 1292, the life of a recluse when he was “exemplary in his temperance, and edifying in his poetry.” (16)

Sa’di is recognized for the quality of his writing and for the depth of his social and moral thoughts. He is universally recognized as one of the greatest masters of the classical literary tradition in Persian.

SA’DI’S WORKS

Best known works of Sa’di Shirazi are: the *Bostan* (The Orchard) completed in 1257, which is entirely in verse, and the *Gulistan* (The Rose Garden) completed in 1258, which is in prose interspersed with short poems. His “other collected works include sixty five odes out of which, twenty are in Arabic. His odes are dedicated to such diverse themes as spring, Shiraz, didacted matters, and religion. Only twenty of his odes are devoted to advising or praising the kings”. (17) Sa’di is also credited to have written about two hundred *rubai’s* (quatrains), seven *mersiyas* (elegies), and over seven hundred *ghazals* (lyrics).

I shall now discuss in some detail the *Bostan* and the *Gulistan* of Sheikh Sa’di.

THE BOSTAN

The *Bostan*, in early sources referred to as *Sa'di-Nama*, is a moralistic and anecdotal verse work, consisting of about 4100 distichs. (18)

The *Bostan* is entirely in verse and is an exquisite piece of didacted poetry. It comprises of ten sections of the verse, "each a dissertation on wisdom, justice, compassion, good governance, beneficence, earthly and mystic love, resignation, contentment and humility." (19) It is dedicated to Atabek Abu Bakr Zangi, the ruler of Shiraz and was completed in 1257.

The *Bostan* is hailed by the Sufis as one of the greatest of all Sufi classics. It contains a richness of material and beauty of poetry which are almost unparalleled. It is a mine of proverbs, quotations, and practical wisdom. In this Sa'di distinguished between the spiritual and the practical or mundane aspects of life – for example spiritual Sa'di uses the mundane world as a spring-board to propel himself beyond earthly realms. The images in the *Bostan* are delicate in nature and soothing. It is for this reason that the eminent Sufis recognize in it whole range of the Sufic knowledge.

Sa'di himself describes this book thus :

"I travelled in many regions of the globe and passed the days in the company of many men. I reaped advantages in every corner, and gleaned as an ear of corn from every harvest. I regretted that I should go from the garden of the world empty handed to my friends and reflected :

"Travellers bring sugar-candy from Egypt as a present to their friends. Although I have no candy, yet have I words that are sweeter. The sugar that I bring is not that which

is eaten, but what knowers of truth take away with respect....." (20)

In *Bostan* a very high standard of elegance, fluency, colour, and effectiveness is maintained throughout. "The important component is the argument, though the work is generally contemplative, rhapsodic, and exhortatory, rather than closely reasoned in any philosophical sense." (21)

This would sum up about the importance of this book. The book remains a much-quoted work and exemplifies a thorough blend of rational wisdom and linguistic sense that is represented in English by the works of Shakespeare.

THE GULISTAN

The *Gulistan*, or "The Rose Garden", is a landmark of Persian literature. It is probably the single most influential work of prose liberally sprinkled with verse, in Persian tradition, which has proved equally influential in the West as well as the East. It is a collection of didacted stories, sometimes containing short poems, and is widely quoted as a source of wisdom and lives upto its name of Rose-Garden – collection of roses. This book by Sheikh Sa'di was completed shortly after the fall of Baghdad by Halagu Khan Mongol in 1258 and is dedicated to Atabek Abu Bakr Zangi and his son Sa'd.

The *Gulistan* is grouped under eight chapter-rubrics, like eight gates to paradise, and deals with –

1. On the Conduct of the Kings
2. On the Morals of Derveshes
3. On the Excellence of Contentment
4. On the Benefits of Silence
5. On Love and Youth

6. On Frailty and Old Age

7. On the Effects of Education

8. On Manners – Aphorisms and Maxims. (22)

With few exceptions, Sa'di narrates these subjects in Persian prose, typically reserving verse to punctuate the narrative with commentary or draw a moral from it. In several vignettes, he gives a highly stylized account of the circumstances which inspired him to write the *Gulistan* and tells us of the conviction reached after due contemplation.

On the morals of Derveshes, Sa'di relates about Derveshes alluding to many Sufi characters of his time. He has referred about the acknowledgeable Sheikh Shihabuddin Suhrawardy (d. 1234), and Abul Faraj Jawzi (killed in 1258). He has also referred to Dhul Nun Misri (d.859) and Abdul Qadir Gilani (d.1165). On the whole, Sa'di's Sufism seems to be informal as he appeared to be unconcerned with strict adherence to all its principles. (23)

Writing in 1865, Francis Gladwing in *The Gulistan or Rose Garden by Saadi*, says –

“Saadi, though he has not the lyric flights of Hafiz, has wit, practical sense, and just moral sentiments. He has the instinct to teach, and from every occurrence must draw the moral. He is the poet of friendship, love, self-devotion, and serenity. There is a uniform force in his page, and, conspicuously, a tone of cheerfulness, which has almost made his name synonyme for this grace. The word *Saadi* means *fortunate*. In him the trait is no result of levity, much less of convivial habit, but first a happy nature, to which victory is habitual, easily shedding

mishaps, with sensibility to pleasure, and with resources against path.He inspires in a reader a good hope.”
(24)

In the *Gulistan*, Sa'di, for the first time, combines simple and unadorned prose to create a new genre not clearly indebted to any prior form, and by joining the previously distinct prose and verse registers a unified literary idiom. Sa'di created a “true literary form out of what had hitherto been only too often a rather shapeless mass of ill-assorted materials.” (25)

Sa'di's extensive travels acquainted him with details of marvelous adventures, the vicissitudes of life, conversation of enlightened sages, the acquisition of sciences and knowledge which he has described in the form of anecdotes or parables in the *Gulistan*. “His favourite mode is a simplicity and tenderness of heart, a delicacy of feeling and judgement, and that exquisitely natural view in which he relates his many apologies and parables, with a sort of sententious and epigrammatic turn.” (26) In the *Gulsitan* Sa'di has praised alms, hospitality, justice, courage, beauty, and humility. He “respects the poor, and the kings who befriend the poor. He admires the royal eminence of *dervish* or religious ascetic. He praises humility. ‘Make thyself dust to do anything well’.” (27)

The *Gulistan*, in short, “is a collection of anecdotes, drawn from the rich stores of his observation and experience with ethical reflections and maxims of worldly wisdom based thereon” (28) during his long odysseys to far off lands.

In the *Gulistan* Sa'di's prose style, described as “simple but impossible to imitate”, flows quite naturally and effortlessly which has been quite skillfully captured by Iraj Bashiri in his biography of Sa'di. (29)

AS AN ETHICAL CODE:

The *Gulistan* is sometimes described as an ethical code of human behavior and Sa'di is referred to as essentially an ethical poet and teacher. E.G Browne has quoted in his monumental work, *The Literary History of Persia*, a few examples of which are given hereunder.

"The moral of the very first story in the *Gulistan* is that "an expedient falsehood is preferable to a mischievous truth." The fourth story is an elaborate attempt to show that the best education is powerless to amend inherited criminal tendencies. The eighth counsels princes to destroy without mercy those who are afraid of them, because "When the cat is cornered, it will scratch out the eyes of the leopard." The ninth emphasizes the disagreeable truth that a man's worst foes are often the heirs to his estate. The fourteenth is a defence of a soldier who deserted at a critical moment because his pay was in arrears." (30)

There are several similar moral stories depicting the frailty of human nature in day to day life. The real charm of Sa'di lies in the catholicity of his work in which is found "matter for every taste, the highest and the lowest, the most refined and the most coarse," (31) and from his pages sentiments may be culled for every day occurrences.

INFLUENCE OF SA'DI

Sa'di has been universally regarded as the outstanding practitioner of inimitable simplicity in Persian literature and his works have exercised a great influence which I will discuss now.

IN TURKEY:

In Ottoman Turkey, there was a plethora of commentaries on the *Gulistan* and from the sixteenth century, it is testified, its widespread

use as a text book, both of the Persian language and of Islamic ethics. (32) The regular commentaries in Turkish also appeared from then onwards, and throughout the centuries, the *Gulistan* continued to be used as a medium of Persian language and, more generally, of ethical instruction in Ottoman lands.

IN INDIA:

The original was popular right from the thirteenth century in India for Princes of the royal household, and also in the *madrassas*, both the *Bostan* and the *Gulistan* became a primary text for the students of Persian which continued until the twentieth century.

However, the early commentaries in India were written in Persian. The earliest was written by Owais bin Alauddin Adam for the Bahmani Sultan in 1494. (33) In his *Khayaban-i-Gulistan*, published in New Delhi in 1852, Sirajuddin Ali Khan Arzoo alludes to prior commentaries by Mir Nurullah Ahrari and Maulana Sa'd Thattavi, among others. Commentaries on the *Gulistan* continued to appear in the sub-continent throughout the nineteenth into the early twentieth century, in both Persian and Urdu. (34)

In 1771, Sir William Jones in his *Grammar* of the Persian language advised students of Persian language to pick as their first exercise an easy chapter of the *Gulistan* to translate. Later on it became the primary text of Persian instructions for officials of British India at Fort William College, established in Calcutta in 1801, and at Haileybury College in England, established in 1806, with selection of the text being separately in primer form. (35)

IN THE WEST:

Sa'di's works, especially the *Bostan* and the *Gulistan*, have been translated into almost all the languages of the West and are profusely quoted by the Western scholars in their writings.

Andre du Ryer was, perhaps, the first European to present Sa'di's works to the West by means of a partial French translation of the *Gulistan* in 1634. Adam Olearius, a German scholar, followed soon with a complete translation of the *Bostan* and the *Gulistan* into German in about 1654. Goethe (1749-1832) has quoted Sa'di in his *West-Oestlicher Divan*. Alexandar Pushkin (1799-1837), one of Russia's most celebrated poets, has quoted Sa'di in his works. Ralph Aldo Emerson (1803-1889) read the *Gulistan* in translation in 1843; he wrote a preface for the American edition of Gladwin's translation in 1865 (to which a reference has already been made). (36)

Although Sa'di's name is associated with many famous names in the West, three are outstanding in the development of his persona; viz; Sir William Jones, for whom Sa'di was a household name while in India, introduced Sa'di to England. In France it was picked up by Victor Hugo and Balzac, and in Germany by many, especially Goethe, who all added "an international dimension to Sa'di's fame and moved it across the Atlantic in the direction of American Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry Thoreau." (37)

CONCLUSION

Sa'di Shirazi lived a long life in which first part was devoted to study and laying up a stock of knowledge; the second part was spent in treasuring up experience, and disseminating that knowledge, during his wide-extending travels; and he spent remainder of his life in retirement as a recluse, when he was exemplary in his temperance, and edifying in his piety. It was in the third phase of his life that he penned his most famous works, the *Bostan* in 1257, and the *Gulistan* in 1258, soon after the destruction of Baghdad by Hulagu Khan. After 1259, Sa'di went into retirement and was heard of no more.

In the final analysis we come to the conclusion that Sa'di is the quintessential Muslim humanist, the first such wise man to be universally recognized. He is well known for his aphorisms, the most famous of which, "Bani Adam", calls for breaking all the artificial barriers between beings. The world honours Sa'di today by gracing the entrance of the Hall of Nations in the United Nations, New York, with this call –

بنی آدم اعضای یک دیگراند
کسه در آفرینش ز یک گوهراند
چو عضوی به درد آورد روزگار
دگر عضوها را نماند قرار
تو کز محنت دیگران بی غمی
نشاید کسه سلامت نهند آدمی

(Tr.) Human beings are members of a whole,
In creation of one essence and soul.
If one member is afflicted with pain
Other members will uneasily remain.
If you have no sympathy for human pain,
The name of human you cannot retain. (38)

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

1. E.G. Browne, *The Literary History of Persian*, in IV Volumes, Vol.II, 1928, Cambridge, p.526. Niccole Machiavelli (1469-1527) was an Italian historian, politician, diplomat, philosopher, humanist and writer of Florance and is considered to be a founder of modern political science and more specially of political ethics.
2. Browne, *op.cit.*, p.526.
3. R.M. Chopra, *Indo-Iranian Cultural Relatrions Through the Ages*, Iran Society, Kolkata, 2005, p.46.
4. According to E.G. Browne, *op.cit.*, p.526, Sa'di's full name was Musharrifuddin bin Mushlihuddin Abdullah.
5. According to Browne Sa'di was born in 1184 (*op.cit* p.526) but according to other scholars, 1195 to coincide with the accession of Atabek of Fars, Sa'd bin Zangi.
6. Iraj Bashiri, "Shaykh Maslih al-Din Sa'di Shirazi", 2003, article Online.
7. Browne, *op.cit.*, pp.526-527.
8. Ibid., pp.527-528.
9. Ibid., p.528.
10. Ibid.
11. He went to all these places not necessarily in the same order as mentioned.

12. Browne, *op.cit.* p.529.
13. This article was written in 2001 and again in 2003. Now on-line Angelfire.
14. Browne, *op.cit.*, p.528.
15. In an essay written on the "Life and Genius of Sheikh Saadi" by James Ross included by Francis Gladwin in his book *The Gulistan or Rose Garden by Sheikh Saadi of Shiraz*, 1865, Boston.
16. James Ross, *op.cit.*, pp.32-33.
17. Iraj Bashiri, *op.cit.*
18. G.M. Wickens, "Bustan", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*
19. Iraj Bashiri, *op.cit.*
20. Taken from the Sa'di's preamble
21. G.M. Wickens, *op.cit.*
22. The Chapter titles were given in 1899 translation of the *Gulistan* by Sir William Arnold.
23. Faruzanfar, Badi al-Zaman, "Sa'di wa Sahrawardi", *Sa'di-nama*, pp.,687-706
24. *The Gulistan or Rose Garden by Sheikh Saadi Shirazi*, translated by Francis Gladwin, 1865, Boston, Preface (pp.VII-VIII)
25. A.J. Arberry, *Kings and Beggars: The First Two Chapters of Sa'di's Gulistan* London, 1945, p.21.
26. Ross's Introduction in the translation of Francis Gladwin's "*The Gulistan or Rose Garden by Sheikh Saadi Shirazi*, p.67.

27. Francis Gladwin, *op.cit.*, p.X.
28. Browne, *op.cit.*, pp.528-29.
29. Iraj Bashiri, *op.cit.*
30. Browne, *op.cit.*, pp.530-531.
31. Ibid., p.532.
32. Yazinci, Tahsin, "Athar-i-Sa'di"-in *Zikr-i-Jamil-i-Sa'di*, III, pp.317-28.
33. Franklin Lewis, "Golestan-e-Sa'di (originally published in 2001, updated in 2012) in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.
34. Aref Nowshahi, *Ferest-i-Chapha-ye Athar-i-Sa'di*, 1984, pp.113-119.
35. Franklin Lewis, *op.cit.*
36. Ibid.
37. Iraj Bashiri, *op.cit.*
38. This aphorism is taken from the *Gulistan* of Sa'di, Chapter 1, Story 10.



AMIR KHUSROW

**ABU HASAN YAMINUDDIN AMIR
KHUSROW (1253-1325) :**
**THE GREATEST PERSIAN WRITING POET AND SUFI
MUSICIAN**
OF MEDIEVAL INDIA
ABSTRACT

Abul Hasan Yaminuddin Khusrow (1253-1325), popularly known as Amir Khusrow, was a great poet, a great scholar and a great Sufi musician; a polymath, an iconic figure in the cultural history of the Indian sub-continent; a mystic and a spiritual disciple of Nizamuddin Auliya of Delhi; a notable poet, but also a pioneer of Indo-Muslim music; a prolific and seminal musician who invented both the Sitar and Tabla, and introduced *Qawwali*, *Khayal* and *Tarana*; and, in the process, became the embodiment of cultural ethos of India.

Amir Khusrow wrote poetry primarily in Persian but also in Hindwi. He had the ability and propensity to write and emulate all styles of Persian poetry which had developed in medieval Iran – from Khaqani's forceful *qasidas* to Nizami Ganjavi's *Khamasa*. The verse forms, in Persian, that he has written include *ghazal*, *mesnavi*, *qa'tta* and *ruba'i*. His contribution to the development of *ghazal*, hitherto little known in India, is particularly significant.⁽¹⁾ Many playful riddles, songs and legends are attributed to him. Through his enormous literary output and the legendary folk personality with Sufi leaning, Amir Khusrow represents one of the first Indian personages with a true multi-lingual, multi-cultural and pluralistic identity. His Persian poetry, even in Iran, was greatly appreciated and admired and he was bestowed the sobriquet of *Tuti-i-Hind*, or the Parrot of India.

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Khusrow was the son of Amir Saifuddin Mahmud Shamsi, who was a Turkish officer and member of the Lachin tribe of Transoxiana, belonging to Qara-Khitais. (2) His mother was the daughter of Imadul-Mulk Rawat Arz, the famous war minister of Sultan Balban (1266-1286), who belonged to the Rajput tribes of Uttar Pradesh. (3)

Amir Saifuddin, who was the chieftain of Hazara, migrated to India just before the invasion of Transoxiana by the Mongol Chenghiz Khan, and was welcomed by Sultan Iltutmish (1211-1236) the ruler of Delhi Sultanate. Between 1226 and 1230, Amir Saifuddin was granted a fief in the district of Patiali, now in Etah district in U.P. He was married to Bibi Daulat Naz who bore him three sons and a daughter. Yaminuddin Khusrow was one among them, born at Patiali, in 1253. Amir Saifuddin died in 1260 when Khusrow was barely seven years old. After the death of his father, Khusrow along with his mother came to Delhi to his maternal grand-father Imadul-Mulk. He grew up under the guardianship of his grand-father.

Khusrow was intelligent and providentially endowed with poetic talent. He started composing verses, at the age of eight. First compilation of his verses, *Tuhfat us-Sighr* (Offerings of a Minor) was made in 1271 when he was eighteen. When he was twenty-three, his grandfather passed away. He soon joined the army of Malik Chhajju, a nephew of Sultan Balban. His poetic talent was brought to the notice of his master and Khusrow was greatly honoured. Khusrow remained devoted to his mother who was a constant source of inspiration to him.

In the meantime, Khusrow recited his poetry before Bughra Khan, son of Sultan Balban, who was so enchanted with his

poetry that, it is said, the prince showered countless gold coins on young Khusrow that he not only came under the protection of Prince Bughra Khan, whom he served for four years, but also earned a good fame and name. In 1277, Bughra Khan was appointed viceroy of Bengal, Khusrow went to Bengal but came back soon and decided to remain in Delhi.

In 1279, the eldest and favourite son of Sultan Balban, Prince Muhammad, viceroy of Multan, came to Delhi and, in 1280, took Amir Khusrow and another younger contemporary poet by the name of Hasan Sijzi, also known as Hasan Dehlavi, to Multan. In those days, Multan was considered as the Gateway to Hind, a safer haven and a great centre of literary and cultural activities, where many scholars, divines and Sufis had come to settle in the wake of Mongol invasion of Central Asia.

The court of Prince Muhammad had come to be known as a safer haven for shelter and reverence to which many great men of talent from Central Asia and Khurasan had come to embellish. Prince Muhammad also provided liberal patronage to all of them. (4) Amir Khusrow and Hasan Dehlavi spent five years in Multan from 1280 to 1285, where both of them vied with each other in bringing out their best. In 1285, Prince Muhammad was killed in an ambush by the Mongols whose loss was deeply felt by Sultan Balban, who was already eighty, and did not survive thereafter for long.

The stay of Khusrow and Hasan Dehlavi for five years in Multan, in their formative period, benefited both of them "because they had come in contact with many celebrated poets, writers and Sufis. These eventful five years proved immensely, and intrinsically, inspiring to both Khusrow and Hasan". (5) Khusrow has said: "For five years I watered the five rivers of Multan with the seas of my delectable verses." (6)

In 1286, Sultan Balban died and was succeeded by his grand-son Kaikobad, who ruled barely for two years, and died in 1288. Amir Khusrow served under him. Upon the death of Kaikobad, a Turk soldier of fortune, Jalaluddin Khalji, took power in his hands and ruled until 1295. Since Jalaluddin Khalji was himself a poet of Persian and loved poetry, Khusrow was highly honoured and respected in his court, and was bestowed the title of "Amir" and came to be known as Amir Khusrow.

Upon the murder of Jalaluddin in 1295, his nephew and son-in-law, Alauddin Khalji ascended the throne and ruled until 1316. (7) Amir Khusrow wrote a short autobiographical *mesnavi* called *Shah-Namah Mun* – on Alauddin's life. Amir Khusrow was among the few notables who blessed Alauddin Khalji, who was a suspect in having a hand in the murder of Jalaluddin. Alauddin was a great ruler who extended his empire in all directions. He was a brave ruler and able administrator. It was during Alauddin's reign that Amir Khusrow wrote most of his works and became a leading luminary in the poetical world. Alauddin was much pleased with Khusrow's compositions and rewarded him handsomely.

After Alauddin, his son Qutabuddin Mubarak Shah ruled for four years (1316-1320) whom also Amir Khusrow served well. It was under Qutabuddin Mubarak Shah Khusrow composed a *mesnavi* "*Nahsi Pahar*" (Nine Skies), and *Ejaz-i-Khusrowi* (The Miracles of Khusrow), a work on epistolography, completed in 1319. This work shows author's immense philological talent and gives a good pictures of Indian life at that time. (8)

After Qutubuddin Mubarak Shah, Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq became the Sultan and ruled from 1320 to 1325. It was during his reign that Khusrow wrote *Tughlaq-Nama* (The Book of

Tughlaq). According to A. Schimmel, "One should not blame him for shifting allegiances in a confused political situation; this was the normal practice of medieval poets." (9)

Amir Khusrow served seven kings and three princes, from the time of Ghiyasuddin Balban to Muhammad bin Tughlaq. Poetry was inherent in him and all kings felt proud of his writings and honoured him as the jewel of their crown.

ASA SUFI

Besides being a scholar of uncanny genius, an elegant courtier, and greatest poet of medieval India, Amir Khusrow was also keenly interested in Sufism. His adolescence ushered him to Sufism from 1272 onwards, and he got attached to Nizamuddin Auliya, the great Chishtiya saint of Delhi, who lovingly called him "Turk-Allah", and he devoted a number of poems to his spiritual mentor. (10) He also wrote *Afzal al-Fawa'id*, a collection containing sayings of Nizamuddin Auliya.

His growing attachment with Nizamuddin Auliya took him away from more worldly ambition and he turned more and more to spiritual seeking and ecstasy. When Nizamuddin Auliya passed away in early 1325, Khusrow was so deeply affected that he tore his clothes and went to the grave of his master. In a few months thereafter, in 1325, Khusrow too passed away and was buried close to his master. These graves are a place of pilgrimage for both Hindus and Muslims to the present day.

Amir Khusrow shared his spiritualism, which consisted in his philosophy of love, emanating from the concept of Divine Love, with all the Sufis as well as the commoners and which transcended all the barriers of class, creed and colour.

WORKS OF AMIR KHUSROW

From his adolescence, under the guidance of both Mufti Muziuddin Gharifi and Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, in his poetic compositions Khusrow chose the path of following the trend of Sa'di Shirazi and Kamal Isfahani. (11) Later on, his master in poetry was Shihabuddin Mahmud Badauni, who had written elegant religious and panegyric verses. (12)

In due course of time, Khusrow became a creative poet. He started composing verses in amazing styles, with new idioms and metaphors, which have influenced subsequent generation of poets in romanticism, mysticism and psychic realism. His contribution to *ghazals* was quite significant. The pathos in his *ghazals* are very much relevant even today, so are his *mesnavis* which, for their epic elements and themes, have influenced subsequent generations. He wrote extensively and composed with ease which enabled him to turn his pen to ever new subjects. Altogether he composed 99 (Ninetynine) works. (13) Among his popular works are –

1. *Tohfatul Sighr* (Offerings of a Minor), his first *Diwan* containing poems composed at the age of eighteen.
2. *Wastul Hayat* (The Middle of Life), or his second *Diwan* containing poems composed at the peak of his poetic career.
3. *Ghurratul Kamal* (The Prime of Perfection), poems composed by him when he was between the age of thirty-four and forty-three.
4. *Baqia-Naqia* (The Rest/the Miscellany), completed at the age of sixty-four.

5. *Qissa-i-Chahar Darvesh* (The Tale of Four Darveshes)
6. *Nihayatul-Kamal* (The Height of Wonders), compiled perhaps just a few weeks before his death.
7. *Qiran us-Sa'dain* (Meeting of the Two Auspicious Stars), *Mesnavi* about the historic meeting of Bughra Khan and his son, Kaikobad, after a long journey in 1289.
8. *Miftahul Futooh* (Key to the Victories), in praise of the victories of Jalaluddin Khalji, in 1291.
9. *Ishqia/Mesnavi: Duval Rani-Khizr Khan* (Romance of Duval Rani and Khizr Khan), a tragic love poem about Gujarat's princess Duval Rani and Alauddin's son Khizr Khan, in 1316.
10. *Noh Sepehr Mesnavi* (*Mesnavi* of the Nine Skies), Khusrow's perception of India and her culture, in 1318.
11. *Tarikh-i-Alai* (Times of Alauddin Khalji)
12. *Tughlaq-Nama* (The Book of Tughlaqs), in 1320.
13. *Khamisa-i-Nizami* also known as *Khamisa-i-Khusrowi*, five narrative poems as *Jawab* –

Matla-i-Anwar

Shirin wa Khusrow

Majnun-Laila

Aina-i-Sikandari, and

Hasht Bahisht

14. *Ejaz-i-Khusrowi* (The Miracles of Khusrow), an assortment of prose compiled by him.
15. *Khazainul Futooh* (The Treasures of Victories), one of Khusrow's controversial books, in 1311-1312.
16. *Afzal ul-Fuwaid* (Utterances of Nizamuddin Auliya)
17. *Khaliq Bari* – a versified glossary of Persian, Arabic and Hindwi words and phrases (attributed to Amir Khusrow).
18. *Jawahar-i-Khusrowi*, often dubbed as Hindwi *Diwan* of Amir Khusrow.

Amir Khusrow wrote primarily in Persian except the Hindwi, or Hindustani, *Diwan*. He also wrote a ballad in Punjabi, then known as Lahori. (14) He was well versed in Arabic and Sanskrit. (15) Apart from this, his knowledge of Turkish and Hindustani enabled him to produce exotic puns, word-plays and stunning literary tricks.

KHAMSA-I-AMIR KHUSROW

Here I consider it apposite to write a few words about *Khamisa-i-Amir Khusrow*.

Amir Khusrow wrote five narrative poems between 1298 and 1302 – as a *Jawab*, or Response, or Reprise, to Nizami Ganjavi's (1141-1209) immensely popular *Panj-Ganj*, or Five Treasures. (16) Amir Khusrow undertook his *Khamisa* project not only to pay homage to Nizami, but also to create a body of literature that had its inspiration from, and relevance to, his own cultural milieu. (17) In the process, he gave a distinct identity to Persian poetry produced in India.

Khusrow's five narrative poems were written when he was at the peak of his literary career, not commissioned by any patron, but he wrote them at his own initiative. Another remarkable thing about him is that in each of his five poems, he mentions Nizami by name and makes eloquent statements about the art of poetry and the practice of the art of *imitatio*, or the art of influential literary method of imitation, throwing light on the way this concept was understood by Persian poets of his time. (18)

1. *Matla al-Anwar* (The Ascent or Dawn of Lights):

The first poem in Nizami's *Panj-Ganj*, or *Khamasa*, is *Makhzan al-Asrar* (The Treasury of Secrets); its equivalent in Amir Khusrow's *Khamasa* is *Matla al-Anwar* (The Ascent of Lights). In this poem, like Nizami's, there are twenty didactic discourses (*maqalat*) which cover a variety of subjects dealing with Islamic, ethical and courtly matters, such as speech, mystical love, generosity, and the duties of the kings.

The distinctive point in Khusrow's poem is that he has used his Indian background to drive home the point.

2. *Shirin O Khusrow* :

The second poem, *Shirin O Khusrow*, composed by Khusrow in 1299, is similar to Nizami's *Khusrow wa Shirin*, except that he has reversed the order of the names in the title. With the pre-Islamic origins of the story, Khusrow has described the vicissitudes of the love of Sassanian Khusrow Parwez (r. 590-628) for Shirin, presented here as the queen of Armenia.

Although he did not change the basic plot of Nizami's poem, there are a few variations in the character portrayal. Khusrow has also simplified the plot in order to be able to narrate the story as dramatically as possible.

3. *Majnun O Laila* :

The third poem, *Majnun O Laila*, written by Khusrow in 1299, is the shortest poem in Khusrow's *Khamasa*. Here also the poet has inverted the names in the title. Khusrow made a few changes in the plot of this story to make it consistent with his dramatic purpose.

In the beginning of the poem, Khusrow advises his son Khizr against becoming a poet, while at the end of the poem he mourns the recent demise of his mother and brother Qutlug.

4. *Aiyna-i-Sikandari* (The Alexanderine Mirror):

Amir Khusrow composed this poem in 1299-1300 and describes the adventures of Alexander, who is usually equated with Zul-Qurnayn, mentioned in the Holy Quran, and hence considered to be a prophet by the Muslims (19), while he was on his campaigns in the East.

Nizami had divided his *Sikander-Nama* in two sections, namely, *Sharaf-Nama* and *Iqbal-Nama* whereas Amir Khusrow's is in one. In Nizami's portrayal there is emphasis on justice and kingship, but in Amir Khusrow's portrayal, Alexander is not a prophet, or a philosopher, but an adventurer and a scientist of sorts. (20)

In this poem, Amir Khusrow has given some technical details concerning the astrolabe and the art of mirror making.

5. *Hasht Bahesht* (Eight Pradises) :

This poem was composed by Amir Khusrow in 1301-1302 which completed his *Khamasa*.

This last work is a collection of stories told to Persian king Behram Gur on seven days of the week, starting on Saturday, by seven princesses representing seven climes, namely, Indian,

Nimruz, Slavic, Tatar, Rumi, Arabian and Khwarizminian, each associated with seven planets, and dressed in clothes and residing each in a palace coloured differently. There are eight stories in this work, one more than Nizami's *Haft Payker*, to surpass symbolically his predecessor. At the beginning of the poem, the poet offers advice to his infant daughter.

The five poems of Amir Khusrow's drew on Nizami's themes with a high degree of refashioning. Generally scholars laud the "*Jawab*", or Response, of Amir Khusrow to Nizami's five narrative poems, but some scholars such as, A. Schimmel, have expressed their opinion about Amir Khusrow's *Khamisa* thus: "This work, in spite of its artistry, lacks the flavor of Nizami's work." (21)

In the final analysis of Amir Khusrow's *Jawab* (Response), or Reprise, to Nizami's *Khamisa*, in my opinion, it was indeed a new development of great significance in the history of Persian narrative poetry in India, because it established a vogue which lasted until the beginning of the 20th century. This gave birth to a new line of literature that became widespread in the sub-continent, as also in Taimurid and Safawid Iran. From then on most of the Persian poets wrote some *mesnavi* besides their lyrical *Diwans*. (22) Both *Khamisas* came to be read together and were referred to as an organic pair. Amir Khusrow's *Khamisa* also set a new trend in Indo-Persian literature as it came to be often imitated by Persian poets in India.

On the whole, it has been observed, much of the recent interest in Khusrow's *Khamisa* has been from outside of India, in spite of his iconic status in the Indian sub-continent. (23)

AS A MUSICIAN

Apart from being a mystic and a great poet of medieval India, Amir Khusrow's genius as a musician speaks volumes, for he was responsible for the invention of the *Tabla*. The term *tabla* originated from an Arabic word, "*tabl*", which simply means "drum". Together with the invention of the Sitar, the grand lute named after a Persian instrument called the *se-tar*, meaning three strings. The instrument seems to have descended from long-necked lutes brought to India from Central Asia. It became popular under the Delhi Sultans in the 13th and the 14th centuries, when Persian-speaking patrons of music and poetry encouraged innovation in Indian art. The *Sitar* flourished under the Mughals and reached its present form in the 18th century. Today it is the dominant instrument in Hindustani music. Both these instruments, thanks to Amir Khusrow, are the foundation of India's classical musical heritage.

Apart from inventing these instruments of classical music, Amir Khusrow was also responsible for introducing many new *ragas*, *raginis*, *pahehis* (playful riddles), *geets* and Indian Sufi vocal style of singing/chanting *Zikr* (remembrance of God). He created *qawwali* on the lines of *bhajans*, sung in Hindu congregations, and, out of *qawwali*, he created *khayal*, again on the lines of *bhajans*. He specially wrote poetry in Persian in combination with Hindwi to sing. Many of his poems even today are used in Hindustani classical music as "*bandishes*".

ESTIMATE

Amir Khusrow started composing poetry from a tender age. His genius thrived and sustained itself with the support of his industrious temperament, and the generous patronage of nobles, princes and kings, on the one hand, and spiritual blessings of Chisthiya Sufi saint Nizamuddin Auliya, on the other. He

emerged as one of the original poets of Persian and Hindwi of India, innovating new metaphors and similes, and was thus hailed as the greatest poet of medieval India.

He wrote poetry primarily in Persian and also in Hindwi – a combination of local dialects and *Khari-Boli* (Upright Speech), which in the subsequent period evolved into Hindi and Urdu.

Amir Khusrow also composed songs and riddles in the commonly spoken dialect of the time which became extremely popular with the common people, and even prompted Jawahar Lal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of Independent India, to write in his book *The Discovery of India* (1961): “Khusrow’s enduring fame in India rests on the riddles, quibbles and songs written by him.”

Amir Khusrow was an astute politician and tactician. He served seven kings and three princes, spanning three important dynasties. Obviously, his diplomatic skills enabled him to remain in royal favour in such turbulent times.

The innumerable writings of Amir Khusrow are of immense importance to us even from the historical point of view. Since he lived most of his life in Delhi, capital of the Sultanate, and as he had witnessed historic events and, on many occasions, was present in military campaigns, he has given eye-witness account. In many of his works he has described these events and has given fairly good account of political and social life of the times. These writings form an invaluable source of authentic history of the period in which he lived. (24)

Amir Khusrow served as an ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity in his time. About his Hindwi poetry, he says: “A few poems that I have composed in Hindwi, I have made a gift of

them to my friends. I am a Hindustani Turk. I compose verses in Hindwi with the fluency of running water.” (25) His spiritualism consisted in his philosophy of love, which he imbibed from his spiritual mentor, Nizamuddin Auliya, and which is amply reflected in his poetry, both Persian and Hindwi. The depth of humanism in his compositions sprang from the concept of ‘Divine Love’. His humanism transcended all artificial barriers of cast, creed and colour. He was indeed a legend in his times. (26)

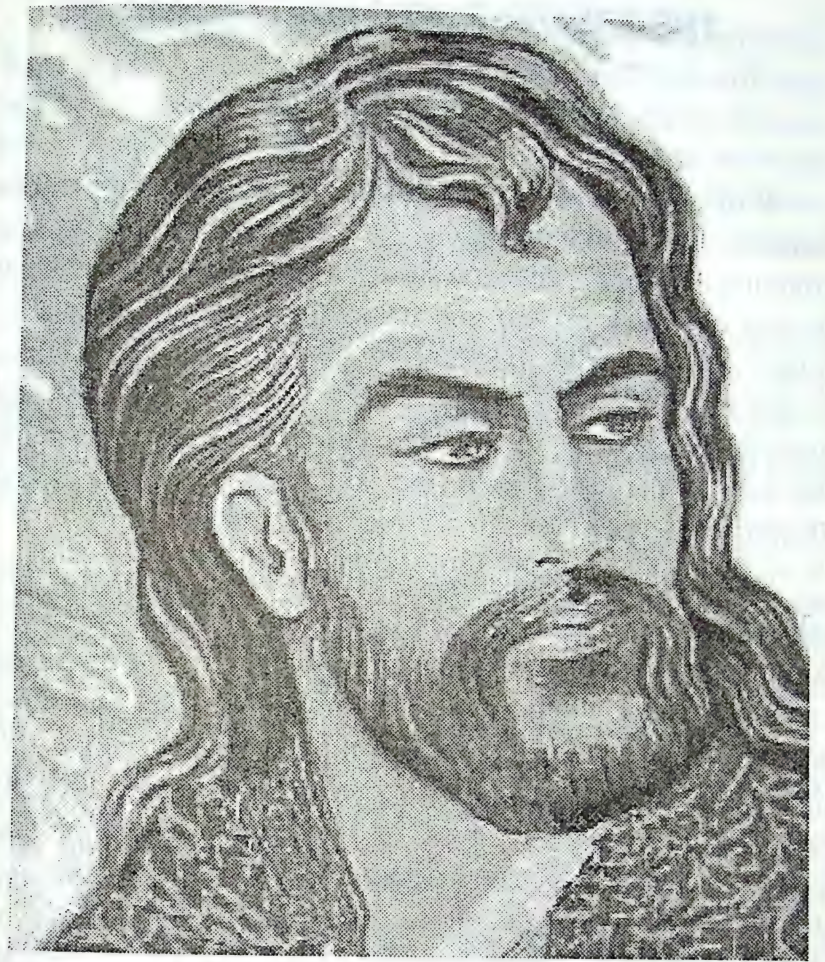
Besides from being a great poet and a humanist, he was a pioneer of Indo-Muslim music. Many of his poems, *ragas* and *raginis* are used today in Hindustani classical music. He became the embodiment of cultural ethos of India. (27)

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13. Chopra, *op.cit.*
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16. Regarding Nizami's *Khamsa* reference may be made to chapter on Nizami in this book.
17. Sunil Sharma, "Khamsa-i-Amir Khusrow", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 2010, updated in 2012.
18. The art of *imitatio*, or literary method of imitation, was formulated by Greek author Dionysius of Halicarnassus in the first century B.C., which conceived it as the rhetoric practice of emulating, adapting, reworking and enriching by an earlier author.
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HAFIZ SHIRAZI

SHAMSUDDIN MUHAMMAD HAFIZ SHIRAZI : THE GREATEST LYRIC POET OF PERSIAN

ABSTRACT

Hafiz Shirazi who perfected the art of *ghazal* (lyric) in Persian and sang chiefly of the Spring, the Rose, the Nightingale, Wine, Youth and Beauty and at times of the Eternal Beauty of which all fair and desirable things are only pale reflection, and who, because of his extraordinary poetic rendition of mystical nature and mingling of spiritual and material nature in his verses, was hailed by his admirers in his life-time as *Lisanul-Ghaib* (the Tongue of the Unseen) and *Tarjimanul - Asrar* (the Interpreter of Mysteries).

Hafiz Shirazi, Persian poet of lyrics in Iran, whose life and poems have been the subject matter of much analysis, commentary and interpretation, has influenced post-fourteenth century Persian writing and literature more than any other author. (1) He is primarily known for composing his *ghazals* (lyrics) in which the themes dealt with by him are : worldly love and Love-Divine, faith and exposing the prevalent hypocrisy. His influence on Iranians and other Persian-speaking and Persian-knowing people can be found in *Fal-i-Hafiz*, or "Hafiz Readings", frequent use of his poems in Persian traditional music, visual arts and Persian calligraphy; whereas his reputation and influence can be judged from the adaptation, imitation, translations, and even transliterations, of his poems which exist in all the major languages of the world. He was the greatest lyric poet of Persian and remains unsurpassed even today.

BRIEF LIFE-SKETCH

In spite of his profound effect on the life and culture of Iran, and his enduring popularity and the immense influence he has exercised, very few details of Hafiz's life are known. Even British Orientalist E.G. Browne, who has authored monumental *A Literary History of Persia*, in 4 Volumes, laments in regard to Hafiz and even some of the other renowned Persian poets and authors in the following words :

"Indeed, notwithstanding the numerous biographies of poets given by Dowlatshah, and in the *Atash-kada*, (2) *Haft Iqlim* (3) and other similar well-known works, the lack of authentic particulars as to the lives and characters of other poets is very discouraging feature in our quest.

Most of the anecdotes given in these books are trivial or fictitious, and, save for what can be gleaned from their verses (where again we are often hampered by the lack of anything approaching a critical edition), we are finally driven to admit that we know very little indeed about most of them. They were generally poor men, often socially obscure, and as such were completely ignored by contemporary historians, which all that later generations who appreciated their merit could do was, as a rule, to string together a few more or less trivial anecdotes, evidently constructed in many cases to explain or illustrate passages in their poems." (4)

On the whole, the best and perhaps the most comprehensive study of Hafiz's life is contained in Maulana Shibli Numani's Urdu work on Persian Poetry entitled *She'ru'l Ajam*. Shibli Numani has again quoted from *Mai-Khana* of Abdun-Nabi Fakhruz-Zaman, compiled in 1626-27 in India, in the reign of Mughal emperor Jahangir. He has constructed a general outline

of the life of Hafiz Shirazi which goes like the following: Hafiz was born in the central Iranian city of Isfahan, sometime between 1317 and 1326. His father, Bahauddin by name, was a merchant who moved from Isfahan to Shiraz in the time of the peaceful Atabeks of Fars, while Hafiz was still a child. Bahauddin enriched himself by commerce, but died when Hafiz was very young, leaving his affairs in confusion, and his wife and little son in penury, so that latter was forced to earn his livelihood by the sweat of his brow. Nonetheless Hafiz found time and means to attend a school in the vicinity where he managed to get well educated and became fluent in Arabic and Persian. He memorized the Quran by heart at an early age in consequence of which afterwards adopted his pen-name 'Hafiz', meaning "Rememberer". While growing he is believed to have worked as a copyist and a baker's apprentice before acquiring the support of courtly patrons. He soon began to compose and recite poems in Persian with little success until he visited the shrine of Baba Kuhl on a hill to the north of Shiraz where he was on a vigil, or *Chilla*. According to the legends, it is said that there he was visited by Imam Ali, who is supposed to have given him some heavenly food and told him that henceforth the gift of poetry and the keys of all knowledge should be his. After this his poetry became mature and he was sought after by his patrons. Later in life, he became a teacher of religious studies of a college in Shiraz. (5)

He died in or about 1390 and was buried in the beautiful Musalla Gardens of Shiraz, on the banks of his beloved Ruknabad river. (6)

PATRONS OF HAFIZ

According to Maulana Shibli Numani's Urdu work on Persian Poetry, *She'rul-Ajam*, the first patron of Hafiz was

Shah Abu Ishaq Injou, son of Mahmud Injou, who was appointed governor of Fars in the reign of Ghazan Khan. Abu Ishaq himself was a poet of Persian and extended his patronage to poets. Abu Ishaq by nature was a pleasure loving governor whose reign did not last long. Referring to Abu Ishaq's genial reign in Shiraz, Hafiz says –

راستی خاتمہ فیروزہ بواسطہ حق،

خوش درخشید ولی دولت مستعجل پور،

(Tr.) In the turquoise ring of Abu Ishaq

Flashed finely, but it was transitory
prosperity. (7)

After Abu Ishaq, Hafiz came under the patronage of Mubarizuddin Muhammad, who ruled over Fars from 1353 to 1357, and was very harsh, stern and ascetic in character. Mubarizuddin was succeeded by Shah Shuja who ruled from 1357 to 1383, with whom Hafiz had sometimes good and sometimes troubled relationship. Shah Shuja had a great opinion of a poet named Imad-i-Faqih (The Jurisconsult) of Kirman. Since Hafiz expressed his scorn for Imad, Shah Shuja disliked Hafiz. Shah Shuja was succeeded by his son Zainul Abedin in 1383. It is in 1387 that Amir Taimur came to Shiraz and that much talked – about supposed meeting between Taimur and Hafiz, described by Dawlat Shah, had taken place. This meeting will be discussed later. Zainul Abedin was deposed by his cousin Shah Mansur in 1387 soon after the visit of Amir Taimur. Hafiz celebrated Mansur's triumph in a *qasida* beginning :

یہا کہ رایت منصور پادشاہ رسید،

نوید فتح و ظفر تا بہر و ماہ رسید،

(Tr.) Come, for the standard of king Mansur has arrived;

The good tidings of consequent and victory have reached the Sun and the Moon.(8)

Hafiz, as earlier mentioned, died in 1390. The earliest witness to Hafiz is the preface to the first collection of his poems which was written by Hafiz's friend and contemporary named Muhammad Gulandam in which Gulandam has praised Hafiz's genius, his celebrity status, and his compassionate nature and lists among Hafiz's preoccupations the "diligent study of the Quran, constant attendance to the king's business, annotation of the *Kashshaf* and the *Misbah*, the perusal of the *Matali* and the *Miftah*..... which prevented him from collecting his verses and odes, or editing and arranging his poems", (9) into one volume.

Tradition, perhaps, based on some of his *ghazals*, suggests that Hafiz had a love affair, but there is no weighty authority to confirm it. That he married and had several children is probable. (10) One *ghazal* seems to refer to the death of his wife, another to the death of a son.

GHAZAL

It is in the perfection of *ghazal* (lyric) and extension of its scope in Persian literature that Hafiz is best known and it is the primary medium of expression used by Hafiz. Each verse of the *ghazal* is usually complete in itself, though one metre and a single rhyme run through the whole poem, the second half of the line balancing the first half in theme and echoing it in rhythm. (11) The *ghazal* is a strict Persian poetic form, like the English sonnet, which has been widely used since the early middle ages.

In his analysis, Maulana Shibli Numani, in *She'rul Ajam*, ascribes perfection of *ghazal* to Hafiz. According to him, to

earlier poets of Persian such as Attar, Sa'di, Rumi, Amir Khusrow and Hasan Sijzi, also known as Hasan Dehlavi, the invariable theme of *ghazal* was erotic or love. Hafiz combined the theme of love, transitoriness of the world, and rhetorical artifices and novel comparisons so as to include the treatment of ethical, philosophical, mystical, homiletic and even political subjects, while keeping the lyrical idiom of the genre. Thus he extended the scope of *ghazal* which has since been emulated, imitated and followed by the successive generations of poets in Persian, Turki and Urdu.

Most of the commentators of *ghazals* of Hafiz, especially the Sufis, or with the Sufistic leaning, have attempted at allegorical interpretations of the terminology used by him which to them is highly symbolic such as Wine means Spiritual Ecstasy, the Tavern the Sufi Monastery, the Magian'elder the Spiritual Guide, the Mole the Point of Real Unity, the Face Revelations of Divine Beauty, the Sea or ocean the Revelation of the Divine Essence, and so on so forth. It also cannot be denied that many of the *ghazals* are to be taken in the symbolic and mystical sense. There are also *ghazals* in which the spiritual and the material appear to have been mingled. No doubt, most of Hafiz's verses can be interpreted in the allegorical and the Sufic vein, but there are many which are secular and profane, and refer to the pleasure of the senses and cannot be explained as allegorical, as for example –

دل من در هوای روی خرّ
بود آشفته همچون موی قرّ

(Tr.) My heart in love with Farrukh's face,
Is agitated like Farrukh's hair. (12)

هزار آفرین بر می سرخ باد،
که از روی مارنگ زردی ببرد،

(Tr.) A thousand blessings be on the red wine
Which hath removed the sallow complexion
from my face. (13)

Though Hafiz has also composed *mesnavis*, *qasidas* and *rubaiyyat*, it is in the *ghazals* that he especially excels which is borne out by testimony of many of his successors, such as Saib, Salim, Urfi and a host of other Persian poets.

To his incomparable skill of composing *ghazals* many encomiums have been showered upon Hafiz but, in my opinion, no one has better expressed it than Sir Gore Ouseley, in *Biographical Notices of Persian Poets*, (London, 1826, p.23), who says –

“His style is clear, unaffected and harmonious,
displaying at the same time great learning,
matured science, and intimate knowledge of
the hidden as well as apparent nature of
things; but above all a certain fascination
of expression unequalled by any other poet.”

In his sixties, Hafiz composed more than half of his *ghazals*. It was about this time of his life when, according to another legend, Hafiz is supposed to have met his master Fariduddin Attar in a dream or trance who gave him a cup of

wine to drink. Having drunk the wine, Hafiz attained ‘Cosmic Consciousness’ or ‘God-Realization’. His poetry of this time talks with the authority of a Master who is united with God. Ever since Sufis usurped Hafiz’s *ghazals*, such legends became galore to justify that Hafiz was a Sufi. In fact, Hafiz was not a Sufi, but his poetry can be read from Sufistic perspective.

HAFIZ AND SHIRAZ

Hafiz was devoted to Shiraz and he was never weary of its praises. He also sang about the stream of Ruknabad and the rose garden of Musalla in Shiraz :

بده ساقی می باقی که در جنت نخواهی یافت،
کنار آب رکناباد و گگشت مصلا را،

(Tr.) Bring, Cup-bearer, all that is left of thy wine!

In the Garden of Paradise vainly thou’lt seek
The lip of the fountain of Ruknabad
And the bowers of Musalla where roses twine
And again:

فرق است ز آب خضر که ظلمات جای اوست،
تا آب ماکه منبعش الله اکبرست،

(Tr.) There is a difference between the Water of Khizr,
which dwells in the darkness,

And our water, of which Allahu Akbar is the source. (14)

Miss Gertrude Lowthian Bell, in her Introduction to *Diwan of Hafiz* (London, 1897), and in her sympathetic, and full of

insight observation, says: the city which Hafiz loved so much was besieged and taken five or six times and often changed hands, sometimes drenched with blood and other times there were great rejoicings. But what echo of them is there in his poems? Almost none. She further says that this apparent indifference of Hafiz lends to his philosophy and the picture that he draws represents a wider landscape of his mental eye which was endowed with wonderful acuteness of vision and had penetrated into those provinces of thought which later age was to inherit. To him, in fact, those were mundane incidents which did not merit attention. This would, in my opinion, sum up his philosophy of life and acuteness of vision.

TOMB OF HAFIZ

The tomb of Hafiz is in a beautiful and picturesque garden called after him 'Hafiziyya', situated near Shiraz. The place is now much honoured and frequented by the people of Shiraz and by visitors to that city, and the poet's grave is surrounded by the graves of many others who sought proximity to him and fulfils his prophetic words, thus –

بر سر تربت ما چون گذری همت خواه،

که زیارتکه رندان جهان خواهند شد،

(Tr.) When thou passeth by our tomb, seek a blessing,

For it shall become a place of pilgrimage for the

libertines of all the world. (15)

ALLEGED MEETING BETWEEN TAIMUR AND HAFIZ

The legendary meeting between the great conqueror Taimur and the poet Hafiz is alleged to have taken place at Shiraz and

mentioned by Dawlatshah, the writer of biography of poets. Dawlatshah with his characteristic inaccuracy gives the date as 1393, when Hafiz had been dead for three years.⁽¹⁶⁾ If at all the alleged meeting took place, it must have been in the year 1387 when Taimur for the first time entered Shiraz then ruled by Zainul Abedin Muzaffarid.

The story, which is apocryphal, is that Taimur summoned Hafiz to his presence and upbraided him for his well-known verse –

اگر آن ترک شیرازی بدست آرد دل مارا،

بخال هندوش بخشمه سمرقند و بخارارا،

(Tr.) For the sake of black mole on that rosy cheek of the beloved,

The poet would give away the cities of Samarqand and Bukhara.

And reprovingly told him: "With the help of my sword, I have conquered Samarqand and Bukhara: With whose permission do you dare to offer both my cities for a black mole on the cheek of your beloved." Hafiz respectfully immediately replied to this, "Oh, protector of the world! It is by such thoughtless sacrifices that I have now fallen on evil days." The Conquerer was much pleased with the reply and not only pardoned the bard (17) but also gave him a handsome present.

It must be mentioned here that no mention of any such meeting occurs in contemporary biographers of Taimur. This anecdote, more than anything else, should be taken as an attribute to the ready witticism and presence of mind of Hafiz.⁽¹⁸⁾

HAFIZ AND INDIA

Hafiz was acclaimed throughout the Islamic world during his lifetime, with other poets imitating his work, and offers of patronage to him poured in from Baghdad to India. Hafiz was quite aware of his celebrity status and says –

بشعر حافظ شیرازی گویند و می رقصند،

سیه چشمان کشمیری و ترکان سمرقندی،

(Tr.) The black-eyed beauties of Kashmir and the Turks of Samarqand

Sing and dance to the strains of Hafiz of Shiraz's verse. (19)

Two Sultans of India sought to persuade Hafiz to visit their courts. One of these was Mahmud Shah Bahmani of the Deccan, a liberal patron of poets, who, through his favourite Mir Fazlullah, invited Hafiz to his capital and also sent him money for this journey. Hafiz left Shiraz for the Persian Gulf port of Hormuz and, on arriving at Lar on his way, he met with a destitute friend to whom he paid a substantial amount. The Persian merchants Khwaja Zainuddin and Khwaja Muhammad, who were on their way to India, offered to defray the poets' expenses in return for the pleasure of his company. He came with them to the port of Hormuz, where a ship was waiting to bring him to India, but a tempest arose just as he was embarking caused him such consternation that abandoning his intention, he returned to Shiraz but sent to Sultan Mahmud Shah the poem beginning thus (20) –

دمی باغمه بسر بردن جهان یکسر نمی ارزد،

بمی بغروش دلقی ما کزین بهتر نمی ارزد،

شکوه تاج سلطانی که بیمه جان درو درجست،

کلاه دلکش است اما بترک سر نمی ادرد،

بکوی میفروشانش بجای می گیرند،

زهی سجاد تقوی که یک ساغر نمی ارزد،

پس آسان می نمود اول غمه دریا بیوی سود،

غلط کرده که یک موجش بصد من زرنمی ارزد،

(Tr.) Not all the sum of earthly happiness

Is worth the bowed head of a moments pain,

And if I sell for wine my dervish dress

Worth more than what I sell is what I gain.

The Sultan's crown, with princeless jewels set

Encircles fear of death and constant dread;

It is head-dress much desired – and yet

Art sure 'its worth the danger to the head ?

Down in the quarter where they sell red wine

My holy carpet scarce would fetch a cup –

How brave a pledge of piety is mine,

Which is not worth a globlet foaming up !

Full easy seemed the sorrow of the sea
Lightened by hope of gain – hope flew too fast !
A hundred pearls were poor indemnity,

Not worth the blast. (21)

This story rests on the authority of historian Muhammad Qasim Ferishta of Astrabad, who wrote *Gulshan-i-Ibrahimi* or *Nauras-Nama* for Sultan Ibrahim Adil Shah II of Bijapur in or about 1606-7.

Another Indian king, Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah ibn Sultan Sikandar Shah, ruler of Bengal, is said to have corresponded with Hafiz, who wrote for him the ode beginning

ساقی حدیث سرو و گل و لاله میرود
دین بحث با ثلاثه غزاله میرود
شکر شکن شوند همه طوطیان هند
دین کنند پاری که بیتاله میرود
حافظ ز شوقی مجلس سلطان غیاث دین
غافل مشو که کار تو از ناله میرود

–(Tr.) O cup-bearer there is talk of the cypress,
the rose and the anemone
And this discussion goes on with 'the three cleaning draughts'.

All the parrots of India will crack sugar
Through this Persian candy which is going to Bengal.

O Hafiz, be not heedless of the enthusiasm of the Court
of Sultan Ghiyasuddin,

For thy affair will be furthered by thy lamentation.

(Browne, III, p.287).

This story is stated by Maulana Shibli Numani in his book.

According to a biography of poets entitled *Khazana-i-Amira*, composed in India by Mir Ghulam Ali Khan Azad in 1762-3, a son of Hafiz Shirazi named Shah Nu'man came to India, died at Burhanpur, and is buried in Asir Garh. (22)

HAFIZ AND HIS PERSIAN POETRY

Right from the tenth century when Neo-Persian blossomed in Greater Khurasan, Persian poets like Rudaki followed by poets like Ferdowsi, Anwari, Nizami, Attar, Maulana Rumi, Sa'di, Jami, and a host of others, each in his own way, gave a message to mankind. The fundamental point in each message to man was the inherent, ineffaceable, everlasting nobility of his own soul, in which there was for ever a spark of true divinity which could conquer all the antagonistic and debasing elements in nature. This has been expressed by Persian writers, both in verse and prose, and is not simply a religious or mystic faith, but all-embracing central fact of existence. (23) Hafiz Shirazi has been by far the greatest singer of soul of man.

The poetry of Hafiz is singularly unique as we can find all the strivings, all the sorrow, all the victories and joys, all the hopes and disappointments of each and every one of us. His

poems project at once the sweetness of the joys of this world and its inadequacies. Hafiz is highly critical of hypocrisy and lack of sincerity. He wrote using metaphors and sophisticated symbolism. His *ghazals* are symbolic rather than allegorical expression of man's fate. We also find in him contact, direct and instant, with the outer universe interpreted as an infinite reality of matter, as a mirror of an eternal spirit. (24)

From the verses of Hafiz, it would appear, he was well-acquainted with the whole field of philosophy, history, poetry and literature, with the highest thought then known to his compatriots. In each and every verse, with intense concentration of thought and wisdom, he has produced in amazing variety facets of truth and beauty, of meaning and wisdom. This is especially so in verses produced by him when he was in his sixties. In one of his poems he says—

Even after all this time
The sun never says to the earth,
"You owe Me."
Look what happens with
A love like that
It lights the Whole Sky. – Hafiz. (25)

Hafiz has taught to the subsequent generations the appreciation of beauty, love, gentleness and kindness, the value of all human beings; the wonder of communion with nature. He says –

The Spirit of Hafiz – Forever Alive

I have learned so much from God
That I can no longer call myself
a Christian, a Hindu, a Muslim, a Buddhist, a Jew

The Truth has shared so much of Itself with me
That I can no longer call myself
a man, a woman, an angel, or even a pure soul.
Love has befriended Hafiz.
It has turned to ash and freed me
Of every concept and image my mind has ever
known. – Hafiz. (26)

These eternal truths and values became a motive force and power in Iran. This, perhaps, will explain, why Hafiz has been the national poet of Iran.

Here are a few verses taken from *Diwan-i-Hafiz*, 2008 edition printed in Tehran, with their translations in English by renowned scholars of Oriental lore –

الا يا ايها الساقى ادر كاساً وناولها
كه عشق آسان نمود اول ولى افتاد مشكل ها

Ho, saki, haste, the beaker bring,
Fill up and pass it round the ring;
Love seemed at first an easy thing –
But ah! The hard awakening.

(Trld. by A.J. Arberry).

كار صواب باده پرستى است حافظا
بر خيز و عزم جزم بكار صواب كن

Wine is the sole salvation,
Its worship and works sublime;
Be firm thy determination,
Hafiz – be saved in time !

(Trltd. by A.J. Arberry).

اگر آن ترک شیرازی به دست آرد دل ما را
به خال هندوش بخشم سمرقند و بخارا را

Sweet maid, if thou would'st charm my sight,
And bid these arms thy neck infold;
That rosy cheek, that lily hand,
Would give thy poet more delight
Than all Bochra's vaunted gold,
Than all the gems of Samarcand.

(Trld. by Sir William Jones).

در پاش فتاده ام براری
آیا بود آن که دست گیرد
خرم دل آن که همجو حافظ
جامی زمی است گیرد

Lo, at her feet in lament am I fallen,
Till the Beloved me by the hand taketh,
Happy his heart who, like Hafiz, a goblet
Of wine of the Prime Fore-eternal's brand taketh.

(Trld. by J. Payne).

یکی مست ترکی و تازی درین معامله حافظ

حدیث عشق بیان کن بران که تو دانی

For Hafiz, speak in any tongue thou knowest;
Turkish and Arabic in love are one –
Love speaks all languages beneath the sun.

(Trld. by R. Le Gallienne).

حافظ شکایت از غم هجران چه می کنی
در هجر وصل باشد و در ظلمت است نور

Why, Hafiz, art thou sorrowing,
Why is thy heart in absence rent?
Union may come of banishment,
And in the darkness light doth spring.
(Trld. by A.J. Arberry).

در خرابات منان نور خدا می بینم
این عجب بین که چو نوری ز کجای می بینم

Within the Magian Tavern
The light of God I see;
In such a place, O wonder!
Shines out such radiancy.
(Trld. by A.J. Arberry)

حافظا می خور و رندی کن و خوش باش ولی
دام تو ویر مکن چون دگران قرآن را

But to the fair no longer be a slave;
Drink, Hafiz! Revel, all your cares unbend,
And boldly scorn the mean dissembling knave
Who makes religion every vice defend!
(Trld. by J. Richardson).

بگزار تاو شارع میخانه بگزیم
کز بهر جرای همه محتاج این دریم

Come, let us pass this pathway o'er
That to the tavern leads;
There waits the wine, and there the door
That every traveller needs.

(Trld. by A.J. Arberry).

حافظ مدار امید فرخ از مدار چرخ
دارد هزار عیب و ندارد ثغلی

Think not, O Hafiz, any cheer
To gain of Fortune's wheeling sphere;
Fate has a thousand turns of ills,
And never a tremor of good will.

(Trld. by A.J. Arberry)

شگفته شد گل حمرا و گشت بلبل مست
صلای سر خوشی ای صوفیان باده پرست

The rose has flushed red, the bud has burst,
And drunk with joy is the nightingale –
Hail, Sufis! Lovers of wine, all hail!
For wine is proclaimed to a world athirst.

(Trnld. by Gertrude Bell).

DIWAN-I-HAFIZ – FAL-NAMA

Hafiz, by his admirers, is often entitled *Lisanul-Ghaib*, or the Tongue of the Unseen, and *Tarjumanul-Asrar*, or the Interpreter of Mysteries, and it is believed by Iranian as well as other Persian-speaking people that, in case of doubt as to the course of action to be taken, valuable indications may be obtained by opening the *Diwan of Hafiz* at random which give much richer results. It is for this reason that his *Diwan* has become, throughout the East, the supreme *Fal-Nama*, or Book of Divination, or *Book of Augury*.

Whenever a person is in perplexity and sorrow whatever the cause, whatever the standard of his intellect or emotion, throughout the Persian cultural continent, he turns to *Diwan-i-Hafiz* from the Ganges in the East to the Nile in the West, from the Caspian Sea in the North to the Bay of Bengal in the south – for comfort and solace. Incredible as it may seem, even in his life-time influence of Hafiz had reached Arabia, Egypt, Central Asia, Kashmir, the Decan and Bengal.

Several instances of richer results of auguries are recorded in *Latifa-i-Ghaibiyya*, written by Muhammad b. Muhammad of Darab and lithographed in Tehran in 1886-7. (27)

ESTIMATE

In his life span of about seventy five years, in the last decade or so of his life, Hafiz composed more than fifty percent of his *ghazals* which lends credence to the belief that in early sixties of his life, he had received 'cosmic consciousness' or 'God-consciousness' which resulted in the compositions of *ghazals* with the maturity of a master and can be interpreted in the

mystic sense. His *ghazals*, by the common consent, represent the zenith of Persian poetry.

In the *ghazals* of Hafiz one finds a rare and beautiful combination of fertile imagination, apt diction and silken melodious expression. In the words of Ehsan Yarshater, the expressions of Hafiz's *ghazals* are wedded "a broad humanity, philosophical musings, moral precepts and reflections about the unfathomable nature of destiny, the transience of life, and the wisdom of making the most of the moment – all expressed with a lyrical exuberance that lifts his poetry above all other Persian lyrics." (28)

In the prevalent mystical view of life and the universe in the fourteenth century Iran, attempts were made at finding a mystical interpretation of Hafiz's praise of wine and drunkenness which, many scholars of the poetry of Hafiz concur, are not supported by his *Diwan*. There is no indication at all that he said one thing and meant something else. His language is quite transparent. (29)

Hafiz was very much a man of normal sensibilities with an unmistakable appetite for the beauties and pleasures of life. He was eager to have the necessary material means to enable him to enjoy a good life adorned with music, outings, and having pleasure of *Saqis'* services for which he sought patronage of the high and mighty of his times.

Hafiz, very often, is called an 'Arif' (meaning knowledgeable) or a 'Sufi' (meaning mystic). Here again I quote Ehsan Yarshater: "If by 'Arif' is meant a person of wisdom and insight, broad-mindedness and understanding, given to reflection on human destiny, the transience of life, and the vanity of our worldly concerns, a man who would not go for the dogmatic rigidity of formal religion and the intervention of self-

appointed guardians of faith in the daily life of the believers – there is no reason to deny that epithet to Hafiz". He further argues that if by a 'Sufi' or an 'Arif' is meant a "mystic", that is a person who believes in the theory and practice of Sufism, is attached to certain Order or the circle of a Sufi mentor (*Pir*) or a *Khanqah*, or allows the clarity of his mind to be clouded by the irrational and obfuscated by the woolly thinking of some Sufis and their saints, then the epithet is a misnomer." (30)

It must be pointed out here that confusing Hafiz's lack of fanaticism, his broad world view, and his contemplative and moral musings with "mysticism" would imply a subjective interpretation of his poetry.

In Iran today, in spite of modernist poetry of Nima Youshij and his followers, Hafiz's appeal and popularity have been tremendous which have profoundly influenced *ghazal*-writers of subsequent generations. Despite many upheavals in the literary atmosphere in Iran, Hafiz's appeal and popularity have survived all the developments.

Since verses of Hafiz, which can be interpreted both for *Ishq-i-Majazi* (Worldly Love) as well as *Ishq-i-Haqiqi* (Love Divine) and as most of the Sufi circles in India from the fifteenth century quoted his verses in the course of their discussions and discourses, *Malfuzat* and *Maktubat*, he came to be identified as a Sufi master-poet. In this respect I tend to agree with the opinion expressed by Ehsan Yarshater that Hafiz was not a mystic in the strict sense of the term, but he was a man of profound wisdom, a seer and a sage.

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

1. Yarshater, Ehsan, "Hafiz ! An Overview", (2002) *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. Also refer to "Hafiz and

the Place of Iranian Culture in the World”, a speech delivered by Aga Khan III, on November 9, 1936, in Iran Society, London.

2. *Atash-kada* was composed by the eighteenth century prose-writer Lutf Ali Beg in Iran which is a critical analysis of about eight hundred Persian poets.
3. *Haft Iqlim* by Amin Ahmad Razi is a geographical and biographical encyclopaedia composed in the reign of Mughal Emperor Akbar.
4. *E.G Browne, A Literary History of Persia*, Vol.III (1928), pp.209-10.
5. Ibid., p.274. G.M. Wickens, (1995), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol.III, Leiden: E.G. Brill.
6. E.T. Gray (1995), *The Green Sea of Heaven*, Ashland, White Cloud Press. Also Khorramshahi, Baha al-Din, “Hafiz II : Life and Times,” (2002), *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.
7. Browne, *op.cit.*, p.275.
8. Ibid., p.282.
9. Ibid., p.272.
10. Ibid., pp.287-288.
11. R. Levy, (1969), *An Introduction to Persian Literature*, New York, Columbia University Press, pp.33-35.
12. Browne, *op.cit.*, p.301.
13. Ibid.

14. Both these distichs are mentioned by E.G. Browne, Vol.III, p.291. In the second distich reference is made to *Tang-i-Allahu Akbar* which is a narrow defile wherefrom a traveller approaching from north first sees Shiraz.
15. Ibid., p.311
16. Ibid., pp.188-89
17. R.M. Chopra, *Indo-Iranian Cultural Relations Through the Ages*, 2005, Iran Society, Kolkata, p.47.
18. Ibid.
19. Browne, *op.cit.*, p.283.
20. Ibid., p.285-86.
21. A verse translation of the whole of this poem will be found amongst Gertrude Lowthian Bell’s renderings of *Poems from the Diwan of Hafiz*, William Heinemann, London, 1897, pp.91-93.
22. Browne, *op.cit.*, p.289.
23. In the inaugural address before the Iran Society, London, delivered on November 9, 1936 by Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah Aga Khan III on “Hafiz and the Place of Iranian Culture in the World”, this point has been very effectively elucidated.
24. Sir Sultan Muhammad Aga Khan III, *op.cit.*
25. Quoted by Muslim and Navin Harji in an article “The Treasures of Iran, with Excerpts on Hafiz by his Holiness the Aga Khan III”, on Simerg on-line.

26. It is a stanza of poem by Hafiz composed some time in 1389 and quoted by Sir Sultan Muhammad Aga Khan III while concluding his address to the Iran Society, London on 9.11.1936.
27. Browne, *op.cit.*, p.300.
28. Article by Ehsan Yarshater, entitled "Hafiz – An Overview", (2002 up dated in 2012) *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. Ehsan Yarshater is an Iranian born (1920-Hamadan) professor of Persian language and literature at Columbia University, U.S.A.
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ABDUR REHMAN JAMI

MULLA NURUDDIN ABDUR REHMAN JAMI
(1414-1492) -

**A VERSATILE SCHOLAR, MYSTIC, WRITER AND
POET OF PERSIAN**

A B S T R A C T

Mulla Nuruddin Abdur Rehman Jami (1414-1492) was one of the most remarkable geniuses whom Iran ever produced, for he was at once a versatile scholar, a great mystic, a great writer, a great composer of idylls and lyrics, historian and one of the greatest Sufi poets of Persian literature.

Jami was essentially an outstanding poet-theologian subscribing to the school of thought of Ibnul Arabi. Besides his poetry which, apart from minor productions, consisted of three *Diwans* of lyric poetry and seven romantic or didactic *mesnavis*, he wrote on the exegesis of the Quran, traditions, lives of the Saints, Mysticism, Arabic grammar, Rhyme, Prosody, Music and several other matters. (1) In *Tohfa-i-Sami* of Sam Mirza Safawi fortyseven of Jami's works are enumerated which list is not exhaustive. (2) He was held in the highest esteem by his contemporaries, and even by the Ottoman Sultan, who vainly endeavoured to induce him to visit his court. (3) Even Babur, the first Mughal emperor of India, has written after observing that "in exoteric and esoteric learning there was none equal to him in that time" and goes on to say that he is "too exalted for there to be any need for praising him" and that he only introduces his name "for luck and a blessing." (4)

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Jami was born in Jam, a small town in Khurasan, which now forms part of Ghor province of Afghanistan. His father

Maulana Nizamuddin Ahmad ibn Shamsuddin Muhammad had come from Dasht, a small town in the district of Isfahan. In Jam, Ahmad was a prominent member of the community, and his house was frequented by the learned and the pious. One of Jami's biographers by the name of Nizami Bakharzi relates that the renowned Nakshbandiya Sheikh Khwaja Mohammad Parsa stopped there on his way to Mecca, showing special favours to the five-years-old Abdur Rehman. When Jami entered his teens, the family migrated to the cultural city of Herat. It was at Herat that Jami studied Peripateticism, mathematics, Arabic literature, natural sciences, language, logic, rhetoric and Islamic philosophy at the Nizamiyya University of Herat. Here the young Jami soon established himself as a brilliant, though somewhat arrogant, young scholar, a reputation which he subsequently consolidated at Samarqand. (5) At Herat, his learned father became his first teacher and mentor who was also a Sufi. (6) Jami also learned politics, economics, religion, philosophy and Persian culture. (7)

Early pen-name of Jami was *Dashti* but later he chose to use Jami because of the following two reasons mentioned by him in a poem -

مولد Jam و رشتہ قلم

جزء Jam شيخ الاسلامي است

لا جرم در جریده اشعار

به دو معنی تخلص جامي است

(Tr.) My birthplace is Jam, and my pen

Has drunk from (knowledge of) Sheikhul Islam

(Ahmad) Jam

Hence in the books of poetry

My pen name is Jami for these two reasons.

Afterwards he went to Samarqand then the most important centre of scientific studies in the Muslim world, and continued with his studies in his twenties at Samarqand and Herat, displaying a prodigious memory and powerful intellect in all fields of learning from *Hadis* study to astronomy and mathematics. No sooner had Jami arrived in Samarqand than he saw the Nakshbandiya Sheikh Saduddin Kashgari in a dream; the Sheikh instructed him to leave his studies, go back to Herat, and take up the Sufi path. (8) It would appear that Jami was going through a spiritual crisis in his thirties, and, he did, in fact, return to Herat, give up his scholarly pursuits, and embark upon the Sufi path under the guidance of Saduddin Kashgari. The close relationship between the Nakshbandiya *Silsila* and the Taimurid dynasty decisively shaped rest of Jami's life. It was his Sufi mentor who introduced Jami to the royal court.

When Sultan Husain Baiqara seized power in Herat in 1470, Jami was already established there as a respected teacher and spiritual leader in the city and had already established a good rapport with Sultan Husain's powerful advisor and Vizier Ali Sher Nawai. In 1472, Jami went on a pilgrimage to Mecca. For him and for his entourage all arrangements were made and letters of introduction were given by Sultan Husain Baiqara. Jami's pilgrimage served to enhance his reputation and establish a network of political and scholarly connections that extended beyond the influence of Iranian world.

Jami's position in the court was further strengthened when Ali Sher Nawai joined the *Naqshbandiya Silsila*. For the last fifteen years of Jami's life, he, Sultan Husain Baiqara, and Ali Sher Nawai constituted a religious, military and administrative

'triumvirate' governing Khurasan. In spite of his status, wealth and influence, Jami lived a simple life.

Jami married the grand-daughter of his spiritual guide Saduddin Kashgari after his return from pilgrimage. Jami sired four sons, but three of them died before reaching their first year. The surviving son was called Ziauddin Yousuf and Jami is said to have written *Baharistan* for this son. Jami died in Herat in November 1492. His funeral prayer was led by the Prince of Herat and attended by great number of people from all walks of life demonstrating his profound impact. At the time of his death, Jami was the most renowned writer in the Persian-speaking world, receiving appreciation and payment for his works from as far away as India and Istanbul.

JAMI AND SUFISM

Jami was a multi-faceted personality – Sufi scholar, poet, associate of rulers – and he says that “the practice of scholarship and the composition of poetry served for him veils for the inward state for the concealment of spiritual absorption” that is mandated by the *Naqshbandiya Sufi Silsila*. Jami got affiliated to *Naqshbandiya Silsila*, which was rapidly rising to prominence under the Taimurids in Transoxiana and Khurasan. His association with the Order began when he was just a child of barely five when Khwaja Muhammad Parsa (d.1419), an associate of eponym of this Order Bahauddin Naqshband, blessed Jami. Recalling the event in later years, Jami affirmed that this encounter had already linked him indissolubly to the *Naqshbandiya*. The linkage became manifest when Jami joined the following of Saduddin Kashgari (d.1456) soon after he was going through spiritual crisis. From thence onwards he sought guidance from Saduddin Kashgari. The tie thus forged between the two men was palpably fortified subsequently by Jami's

marriage to a grand-daughter of Kashgari after Jami's pilgrimage to Mecca.

Jami initially submitted himself to austerities of separation from the world and this became so extreme that on his re-emergence he had temporarily forgotten the niceties and social norms.⁽⁹⁾ His retreat was in accord with Naqshabandiya principle of *Khalawat dar Anjoman* ("solitude within society").⁽¹⁰⁾ Soon after his emergence, Jami involved himself in social, intellectual and political activities in the cultural centre of Herat and made a mark for himself. He got engaged in the School of Ibnul Arabi greatly enriching, analyzing and revising some of the doctrines. He advocated intense awareness of God (*Jazba*) in the company of one blessed by Him. He discarded vocal *Zikr* but took recourse to silent *Zikr*. He was at variance with *Naqshbandiya* norms with his occasional indulgence in *Sama* – ecstatic circular motion to the accompaniment of music and song in particular when stimulated by the composition of his romantic *mesnavi Yusuf-o-Zulaikha*.⁽¹¹⁾ He came to believe three goals are to be achieved, namely –

- i) "permanent presence with God" *davam-i-huzoor ma al-Haqq*) through ceaselessness and silence,
- ii) being unaware of one's earthly state, and
- iii) a constant state of inward attachment to a spiritual guide (*ra-bata*).⁽¹²⁾

Oftentimes Jami's methodology did not strictly follow the School of Ibnul Arabi like, for instance, on the issue of mutual dependence between God and His Creatures: Jami stated "We and Thou are not separate from each other, but we need Thee, whereas Thou does not need us."

Jami created an all embracing unity – emphasizing there is unity with the lover, the loved and love and discarding the belief that they are separate. ⁽¹³⁾ Once an aspirant, to become his disciple, approached Jami and said he had never loved anyone. Jami told him, "Go and love first, then come to me and I will show you the way." According to Kashafi, towards the end of his life Jami began to look for authentic seekers (*arbab-i-talab*) but was greatly disappointed for, he said, "seekers are many, but what they seek is only the gratification of their own souls."⁽¹⁴⁾ Jami continued to be known for not only his poetry but also for his spiritual traditions in the Persian-speaking world. In analyzing his mystical accomplishments his greatest contribution in the field was about God's mercy towards men, redefining the way previous texts were interpreted.

Jami's most substantial and widely read contribution to the Sufi thought and literature is his *Nafahat ul-Uns*, a hagiographical compendium that marked the apex of this genre in Persian.

JAMI'S LITERARY WORKS

Jami's active career as a writer extended over fifty years and he wrote a prolific amount of prose and poetry in both Persian and Arabic. He composed in almost all the genres of poetry and penned numerous treatises on a wide range of topics on humanities and religious sciences. According to Sam Mirza ⁽¹⁵⁾, Jami wrote fortyseven titles.

HIS PROSE WORKS

The literary productivity of Jami is quite amazing if one considers over thirty prose works have survived from his pen. Mention has already been made of the *Baharistan*, a work in

mixed prose and verse in imitation of Sa'di's *Gulistan*, that Jami wrote for his son's education in 1487.

Affiliated as he was to the *Naqshbandiya Silsila* of Sufism, Jami's many works are devoted to the practice and teaching of this Order. One of the earliest and most famous of such works is *Lawayeh* (The Flashes of Light), composed in 1465-66. Modelled on Ahmad Ghazali's *Sawaneh*, (16) it consists of a series of mystical meditations in mixed prose and poetry.

The *Lawayeh*, or Flashes of Light, is a theological treatise based on Sufism. The keynote to this work is to be found in the preface. Jami describes the work as "Explanatory on the pages of the hearts and minds of men of insight and divine knowledge". (17)

The *Lawayeh* expounds some very beautiful and ennobling truths. In 'Flash II', Jami pleads for the love of One and the abandonment of all that earthly man loves that distract the attention of the lover for his Beloved – precisely the same theme as that expressed in his *mesnavi Salman and Absal*. (18) He condemns and denounces all other learning except "The Love of God." With the "Inner Light" of the true mystic he sets aside the things of the world as being unsatisfactory. With a strong clear voice of a poet-prophet, he sings –

The fleeting phantoms you admire today
Will soon at Heaven's behest be swept away.
O give your heart to Him who never fails,
Who, ever with you, and will ever stay. (19)

Jami advocates the destruction of Self in order to gain knowledge of the Supreme Self.

The *Lawayeh* is deeply spiritual throughout and full of an almost pathetic pity for those who delight in worldly pleasures and find no joy in contemplating Union with the Lord.

Widely known Sufistic treatise of Jami is *Nafahatul-Uns man Hazratul-Quds* (Breaths of Intimacy from Presence of Sanctity), which is a large collection of biographies of Sufi saints. This book was composed by him in 1478, after his pilgrimage to Mecca. In 1481, Jami wrote *Shawahidun-Nubuwat* (Evidences of Prophethood) at the request of Ali Sher Nawai as a sequel to *Nafahatul-Uns* extending the spiritual legacy of Islam back to the Prophet and his companions. (20) It is a work on Islamic theology.

Many of Jami's mystical writings take the form of commentaries on earlier works, such as, his two commentaries on Ibnul Arabi's *magnum opus Fusus al-Hikam*; the first known as *Naqdun-Nusus* written in 1458-59, and the second was written towards the end of his life in 1490-91 under the title *Sharah-i-Fusus al-Hikam*. (21)

Ibnul Arabi's earliest poetic proponent in Persian was Fakhruddin Iraqi, who wrote a famous treatise under the title of *Lama'at*. In 1481, Jami wrote his commentary on the *Lama'at* of Iraqi under the title of *Asha'at al-Lama'at*. (22) Jami also wrote short treatises on Maulana Rumi's first two verses of the *Mesnavi* under the title of *Risala-i-Naiya*, also known as *Ney-nama*, or "Reed-book," and on a verse of Amir Khusrow under the title of *Sharah-i-Bait-i-Amir Khusrow*. The verse of Amir Khusrow is taken from one of his *Qasidas* which Jami has interpreted from the perspective of Ibnul Arabi's teachings. (23) Jami also subjected his own poetry to an extensive mystical commentary in *Sharah-i-Rubaiyyat* in which 46 of his own quatrains (*Ruba'is*) have been discussed from the

points of view of School of Ibnul Arabi and *Naqshbandiya Silsila*.

In addition to his mystical and theological writings, Jami wrote on literary topics. He wrote four treatises on *Mo'amma* (riddles) which were the height of fashion in the 15th century.⁽²⁴⁾ He also wrote on music under the title of *Risala-i-Mausiqi* in which he wrote a rhythmic and modal systems of traditional Persian music. He composed a text book on Arabic grammar in the last year of his eventful life. Finally, Jami also prepared a collection of his letters under the title *Monsha'at* which helps map his vast network of colleagues, friends and patrons.

HIS POETRY

It is as a poet that Jami is best known. His poetical works comprise of three separate *Diwans*, or collections of lyrical poetry, and seven *Mesnavis*, collectively known as the *Sab'a* ("Septet") or *Haft Awrang* (Seven Thrones), or "The Constellation of the Great Bear".⁽²⁵⁾

DIWANS

The three *Diwans* of Jami's lyrical poetry are –

- i) the *Fatehatu'sh Shahab* (Opening of Youth), compiled in 1479-80;
- ii) the *Wasitatul-Iqd* (Middle of the Necklace), compiled in 1489; and
- iii) the *Khatimatul-Hayat* (End of Life), compiled in 1490-91.

In his lyrical poetry in the *Diwans*, Jami has expressed his ethical and philosophical doctrines. His poetry is fresh and graceful. In the poetry of his *Diwans* the influence of Sa'di and

Hafiz, who preceded him, is quite discernible. Besides containing *ghazals* (lyrics) they also contain *qsidas* (panegyrics). The forms used are *ghazal*, *qatta* and *rubai*. In his verses which are collectively known as belonging to the genre called *Ney-Nama* or "Book of the Reed", Jami has very skilfully imitated the style of prologue to Jalaluddin Rumi's great *Mesnavi*. As a lyrical poet, quoting E.G. Browne, Jami "was certainly one of the most talented, versatile and prolific."⁽²⁶⁾

SEVEN MESNAVIS

The Seven *Mesnavis*, collectively known as the *Sab'a* ("Septet") or *Haft Awrang* comprise the following –

1. *SILSILATUL ZAHAB*, or the "Chain of Gold", which Jami composed in 1425. This *Mesnavi* discusses various philosophical, ethical and religious subjects with illustrative anecdotes and comprises of some 7200 couplets. It is dedicated to Sultan Husain –

شاه سلطان حسین آنکو بست

چرخ را عدلش از تعدی دست

(Tr.) It is dedicated to Shah Husain

Whose Justice bounds the hands of
the Sphere from aggression. (27)

The *Mesnavi* is divided into three sections, or *dafters*. The first section ends with *I'tiqad-Nama*, or Confession of Faith, which shows Jami, inspite of his mysticism, as a thoroughly orthodox Sunni. The second section consists chiefly of discussion on the different kinds and phases of Love,

“metaphorical” and “real” and describes anecdotes of saints and lovers. The third section contains the anecdotes of kings and a few of physicians. Towards the end, Jami has also dwelt on elaborate exposition of two opposite kind of poetry, namely, one “a comfort to the soul”, and two “a diminution of the heart”.(28) Jami has also mentioned many of the earlier poets of Persian, such as Rudaki, Unsuri, Sanai, Nizami, Muizzi, Anwari, Khaqani, Zahir, Sa’di, Kamal and others.

2. SALMAN O ABSAL : This is an allegorical poem of Salman and Absal and dedicated to another distant patron, Sultan Yaqub Aq Qoyunlu. (29) The story revolves round carnal attractions of a prince for his wet nurse.(30) Throughout the poem Jami uses allegorical symbolism within the tale to depict the key stages, of the Sufi path such as repentance. He also expounds on philosophical, religious and ethical questions.(31) The Sufi and Sufism are the key topics in the poem which revolve round profound explanation about the nature of divine mercy.(32)

This work gained renown outside Iran thanks to the English version by Edward FitzGerald, translator of Omar Khayyam.(33)

As Fitz Gerald’s translation has a special interest in the eyes of lovers of Persian literature, I give hereunder just an extract of his translation with the corresponding passage of the original –

چون سلمان دید لطف بیشه را
از سفر کوتاه کرد اندیشه را
بادل فارغ زهر امید و بیم
گشت بآیسال در بیشه مقیم
هر دو شادان همچو جان و تن بهم
هر دو خرم چون گل و سوسن بهم

صحبتی ز آویش اغیار دور

راحتی ز آمیزش تیمار دور

خود چه ز آن بهتر که باشد با تو یار

در میان و عیب جویان پرکنار

(Tr.) Salman saw the Isle, and thought no more
Of Further – there with Absal he sat down,
Absal and He together side by side
Rejoicing like the Lily and the Rose
Together like the Body and the Soul.
What sweeter than your Mistress at your side
In such a Solitude, and none to chide! (34)

3. THE TOHFATUL-AHRAR: The third *mesnavi* is the *Tohfatul Ahrar*, or “Gift of the Free”, is a didactic and moral poem of allegorical and ethical contents and written in response to Nizami’s *Makhzan al-Asrar* and Amir Khusrow’s *Matla al-Anwar*. It contains twenty discourses and comprises of besides doxologies, eulogies of the Prophet, and Supplications to God (*Munajat*) and the last discourse is addressed to the poet’s son Yousuf Ziauddin who was barely four then while his father was sixty. In the preface to the book in Persian prose, Jami writes that he was inspired by Nizami’s the *Makhzan al-Asrar* and Amir Khusrow’s the *Matla al-Anwar*. (35)

4. THE SUBHATUL ABRAR, or “Rosary of the Pious”, is also a didactic poem of theological, mystical and ethical contents very similar to the *Tohfatul-Ahrar*. The story and the moral

are admirable indeed and are quite comparable to Sa'di's older version.

5. YUSUF-O-ZULAIKHA : The fifth *mesnavi* is the Romance of Yusuf and Zulaikha which is by far the most celebrated and popular romantic stories of Iran and Turkey. Jami's rendering of the tale deservedly holds the highest place and on which, one can say, much of his reputation rests. He completed this work in 1483 and it gained currency in Iran and Turkey.

6. LAILA-O-MAJNUN: The sixth *mesnavi* is the Bedouin Romance of Laila and Majnun, completed in 1484, in which Jami has very convincingly described the theme of Love of the Loyal and the Loyalty of Lovers in the following words -

معنی عشق صادق و عاشقان

چون صبح از لعل عشق دم زد
عشق آتش شوق در قلم زد،
از لوح عدم قلم سر افراشت
صد نقش بریع پیکر انگاست
هستند افلاک زادهء عشق
ارکان بزمین فتادهء عشق
بی عشق نستان زینک و بدیست
چیزی که ز عشق نیست خودیست

(Tr.) The Meaning of the Love of the Loyal
And the Loyalty of Lovers.

When the dawn of Eternity whispered of Love,
Love cast the Fire of Longing into the Pen.

The Pen raised its head from the Tablet of Not-Being,
And drew a hundred pictures of wondrous aspect.

The Heavens are the offspring of Love;
The Elements fell to Earth through Love.

Without Love is no token of Good or Evil:
That thing which is not of Love is indeed non-existent.

(Browne, Vol.III.pp.533-534)

7. THE KHIRAD NAMA-I-SIKANDARI: The Seventh *mesnavi* is the *Khīrad Nama-i-Sikandari*, or the "Book of Wisdom of Alexander". In this book also there are ethical and moral anecdotes. Jami devotes relatively few verses to the story of Alexander's adventures and instead turns his attention to stories and teachings of the various philosophers and wise men whom Alexander encounters on his Journeys. (36)

On Jami's lyric poetry, considerable work is done in Europe, especially by German scholars such as Fosenwing, Ruckert, among others. (37) Jami was held in high esteem in Turkey and at the Ottoman Court is proved by the two Persian letters addressed to him by Sultan Bayazid II (1481-1512) which are highly complimentary and included in *Monsha'at* of Faridun Bey. (38) The merit of Jami's lyrics can be judged from the fact that they exercised profound influence over his successors not

only in Iran but also in Turkey. A few of the examples of his lyrics are given hereunder –

می نالیم از جدائی تو دم بدم چوئی
وین طرفه ترکه از تو نیم یک نفس جدا
عشق است و بس که در دو جهان جلوه میکند
گاه از لباس شاه و گاه از کسود گدا

(Tr.) Like the flute I make complaint of my separation from Thee every moment, and this is the more strange since I am not parted from Thee for a single instant.

It is Love alone which reveals itself in the two worlds, sometimes through the raiment of the King, and sometimes though the garment of the begger.

(Browne, III, pp.543-544)

The first distich of the above lyrics is obviously reminiscent of the opening lines of the *Mesnavi-i-Ma'anvi* of Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi.

The following lines are evidently inspired by, and modeled on, the well-known ode of Hafiz, composed in the same metre and rhyme (39)

چو گرد و شوق و صل افزدن چه جای طعن اگر مجنون
بیوی هو دج لیلی فتر دنبال محملها
دل من پُر ز مهر یار و او فارغ نبودست آن
که می گویند راهی هست دلها را سوی دلها.

(Tr.) When the longing for union increases, what occasions, for blame is there if Majnun follows the litters in the hope of (finding amongst them) Laila's howdah?

My heart is filled with love for the Friend, who is not heedless thereof, for they say 'Hearts have a road to hearts.'

(Browne, III, pp.544-545)

In another poem Jami has expressed his thoughts beautifully thus –

ناموس و نام ماتو شکستی ز نیکوان
آرمی ز صد خلیل همین بُت شکن یکیست
جامی در این چمن دهن از گفت گویندر
کاجانراوی بلبل و صوت زغن یکیست

(Tr.) It was thou of all fair ones who didst shatter my name and fame; Yea, of a hundred Abrahams the breaker of idols is but, one.

O Jami, close thy mouth from speech in this garden, for there the song of the nightingale and the shriek of the raven are one.

(Browne, III, pp.547)

Jami epitomizes one of the most talented, versatile and prolific poets of Iran as no other Iranian poet or writer "has been so successful in so many different fields, and the enthusiastic admiration of his most eminent contemporaries is justified by his prolific and many sided genius". (40)

past. This is very true of his commentaries, but even his poetic works have been modelled in some way on earlier works. The *Baharistan* looks back to Sa'di's *Gulistan*, his *mesnavis* revisit themes, stories and structures developed by Sanai, Nizami and Amir Khusrow. Classical Persian poetry is defined by its conventions and it invariably draws on earlier precedents. What distinguishes Jami's poetry is that he has made an effort to codify and consolidate the entire literary tradition upto his time.

Even during his lifetime, Jami's works spread throughout Persian-speaking regions and were warmly received in the Iranian cultural continent and, in particular, in India and Turkey. In Turkey most of his works were translated into Turkish and widely imitated. In Iran proper, within a decade after his death, profound changes, in politics, religion and literary taste, cast a shadow over Jami's reputation. During the Safawid regime, because of the sectarian policies followed by the rulers, Jami's reputation was at its nadir. But from the early 19th century, with the emergence of *Bazgasht-i-Adabi* (Literary Return) movement in Iran, Jami's reputation once again rose rapidly and he has come to occupy his deserved position.

In the final analysis, we come to the conclusion that Jami was a prodigious and prolific talent with a vast knowledge of earlier tradition who devoted his life to consolidating all that had been thus far achieved. In his works, both prose and poetry, one does find the fluent summation of the long history of the integration of the Sufi theosophy of Ibnul Arabi with the Persian tradition and it is here that one can see his vast erudition to its best advantage.

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

1. Browne, E.G., *A Literary History of Persia*, Vol.III, 1928, p.507.

JAMI AND NIZAMI

As the *Sab'a* ("Septet") of Jami was admittedly inspired by, and modeled on, the *Khamasa* ("Quintet") of *Nizami* (1141-1209), twelfth century Persian poet of Ganja, Azarbaijan, and as Jami has admitted in many of his compositions that he was greatly indebted to Nizami, Persian scholars are prone, with some justification, to draw comparisons of Jami as a romantic poet with Nizami. It must be mentioned here that Nizami's poetic style was original and colourful; his works enjoyed great popularity, and episodes from his romantic poems became favourite subjects for miniature painters. Many opinions have been expressed by literati on this subject. I would like to quote from the opinion of Mirza Bihruz son of Mirza Abul Fazl of Sewa (41). He says that Jami's verses rival, and perhaps even excel, those of Nizami in poetical form, sweetness and simplicity as they are free from artificiality; but they fall short of them in strength (*matanat*), poetic imagination and eloquence. It is also emphasized by Mirza Bihruz that to understand Nizami a profound knowledge of Persian language, history of his country and various other sciences is a prerequisite, whereas Jami enjoys greater fame and popularity in India and Turkey and other regions where Persian literature is an exotic

Although Jami's poetic rendition, particularly in respect of his *Sab'a* ("Septet"), is modelled on the works of twelfth century romantic poet Nizami, it bears Jami's unmistakable mark of originality and intellectual vigour.

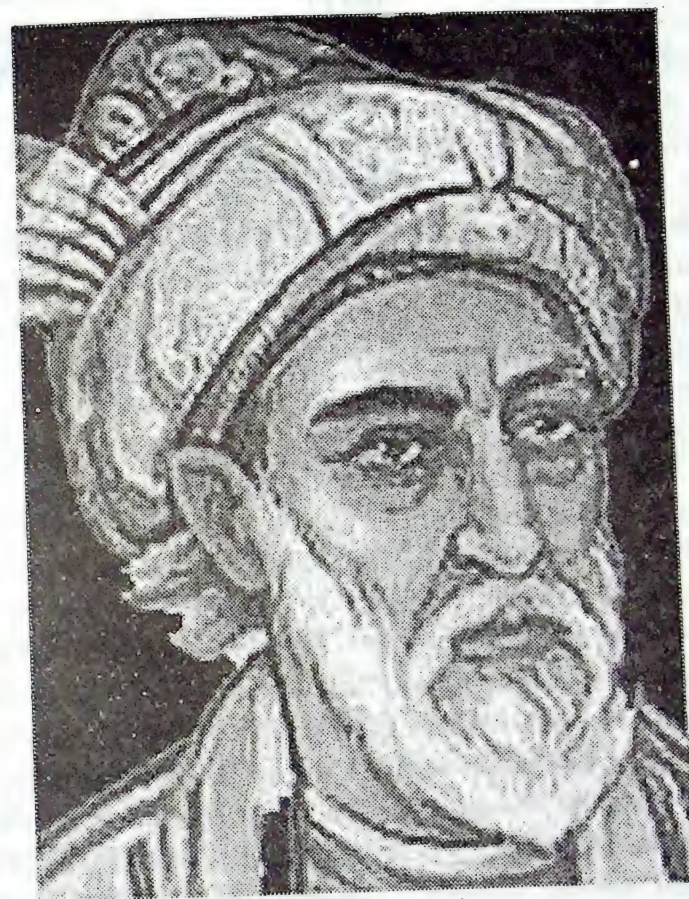
CONCLUSION

In all his writings, prose as well as poetry, the most striking feature of Jami to emerge is its constant reference to the literary

2. Ibid.
3. Browne, *op.cit.*, p.422.
4. *Babur-nama*, (Memoirs of Babur) edited by Ilminsky, pp.222-223. Also quoted by Browne, *op.cit.*, p.507.
5. Paul Losensky, "Jami: Life and Works" in *Encyclopedia Iranica*.
6. Rizvi, Sajjad: "The Existential Breath of Al-Rahman: The Tafsir Surat al-Fatiha of Jami and the School of Ibn Arabi", *Journal of Quranic Studies*.
7. Ibid.
8. Paul Losensky, *op.cit.*
9. Algar, Hamid, "Jami and Sufism", (June 2008), *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.
10. Algar, Hamid, *op.cit.*
11. Lari, Abdul Gafur, *Takmela-i-Hawashiya Nafahat ul-Uns*, ed. Bashir Herawi, Kabul, 1964, p.7.
12. Algar, Hamid, *op.cit.*
13. Annmarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Capital Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975.
14. Fakhruddin Wais Kashafi, *Rasehat-i-Ainul Hayat*, ed. Ali Asghar Moinian, Tehran, 1978, 2 Vo., I, p.252.

15. Sam Mirza was the son of Prince Mohammad Baqir Mirza, eldest son of Shah Abbas I Safawi; Sam Mirza succeeded Shah Abbas taking the name Shah Safi Abbas and ruled Iran from 1629 to 1642.
16. *Sawaneh* was written by Ahmad Ghazali, younger brother of Hujjat al-Islam Muhammad Ghazali, in 1114. Ahmad Ghazali was a Persian mystic, writer and eloquent preacher and in this book he has expounded his ideas of love.
17. Fredrick Hadland Davis, *The Persian Mystics: Jami*, (1908), J. Murray, London, in Introduction, p.18.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Paul Losensky, *op.cit.*
21. Browne, *op.cit.*, pp.513-14.
22. Paul Losensky, *op.cit.*
23. Ibid.
24. Browne, *op.cit.*, p.514.
25. Ibid. pp.515-516.
26. Ibid., p.548.
27. Ibid., 517.
28. Ibid., p.522.
29. Paul Losensky, *op.cit.*

30. Lingwood, Chad, (March 2011) "Jami's Salman wa Absal: Political Statements and Mystical Advice Addressed to Aq Qoyunlu Court of Sultan Yaqub (1490)", *Iranian Studies*, 44 (2), pp.175-191.
31. Ibid.
32. Rizvi, Sajjad, *op.cit.*
33. Paul Losensky, *op.cit.*
34. Browne, *op.cit.*, pp.525-526.
35. Ibid., p.527.
36. Paul Losensky, *op.cit.*
37. Browne, *op.cit.*, p.542.
38. Ibid., p.422.
39. Refer to the first *ghazal* in the *Diwan of Hafiz*.
40. Browne, *op.cit.*, p.548.
41. Quoted in Browne, Vol.III, pp.540-41.



SAIB TABRIZI

MIRZA MUHAMMAD ALI SAIB TABRIZI (C 1592-1677):

CELEBRATED POET OF LATER SAFAWID PERIOD

ABSTRACT

Saib Tabrizi (c 1592/1601-1677), also known as Saib Isfahani, was a Persian poet and one of the great masters of a form of classical Arabic and Persian poetry characterized by rhymed couplets and popularly known as *ghazal* or lyric. In 1624, he came to India and spent almost nine years of formative period of his life in the subcontinent visiting literary centres at Kabul, Delhi, Agra, Burhanpur and other places and spending some time in Kashmir before returning to Iran, where he was appointed poet-laureate by Shah Abbas Safawi II. Saib Tabrizi's reputation is primarily based on his supposedly having composed more than three-hundred thousand Persian couplets, including his epic poem *Qandahar-Nameh*, or "The Book of Qandahar", also known as *Abbas-Nameh*, or "The Book of Abbas". He composed poetry mostly in the "Indian Style" of verses which amply reveal an elegant wit, a gift for the aphorism and the proverb, and a keen appreciation of philosophical and intellectual exercise, inherent in *Sabq-i-Hindi*, which also came to be known as "Isfahani Style", of poetry. Later on, in Iran he came to be well recognized for his Persian *qasidas* during the reigns of Safawid emperors Safi (1629-1642), Shah Abbas II (1642-1666) and Suleiman (1666-1694).⁽¹⁾

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Mirza Muhammad Ali Saib was born in Tabriz. The exact year of his birth is not known, but in one of his *ghazals* there is an allusion that he turned eighty which would suggest that he

was perhaps born in the last decade of the sixteenth century. His father, Mirza Abdul Rahim, belonged to a successful mercantile class, and his uncle Shamsuddin Tabrizi was a good calligraphist and had earned the nick-name of *Shirin-Qalam*, or "Sweet Pen". Saib's family was among those who were evacuated from Tabriz by Shah Abbas I (r. 1587-1629) as a result of Ottoman Turk's incursions there and settled in the area known as Abbasabad in Isfahan. It is here that Saib was educated and began his early literary career. ⁽²⁾

As Persian poetry, on the whole, was languishing in Iran under the Safawids and, like many aspiring Persian poets of the age, Saib was also attracted to the Mughal courts of India, because they provided liberal patronage and good prospects to the budding poets of Persian.

He set off for India in about 1624 for furtherance of his literary career. He first came to Kabul which was then a part of the Mughal empire. ⁽³⁾ Saib's first patron was Mirza Ahsanullah Zafar Khan, young governor of Kabul, who was himself a Persian poet and wrote under the pen-name of "Ahsan". Saib, in return gratitude, acted as a mentor of Zafar Khan in latter's poetic art. ⁽⁴⁾ The two forged a strong friendship and Zafar Khan remained Saib's chief patron for the subsequent several years.

It is said, Saib accompanied Zafar Khan when the latter was called to the imperial court at Agra to pledge his allegiance to the newly enthroned emperor Shah Jahan in 1628. However, according to Ahmad Gulchin-i-Ma'ani, ⁽⁵⁾ Saib probably was not present at the coronation nor did he compose a celebratory poem for the occasion. Saib did accompany Zafar Khan on his military campaigns in the Deccan and spent some time at

Burhanpur which had become a great literary centre. In the meantime, Saib came to know that his aged father had come to Agra so as to urge him to return to Iran. It was only couple of years later that Zafar Khan was posted to the governorship of Kashmir in 1632 that Saib finally started on the road back to Isfahan, after spending some time in Kashmir.

Saib's stay in India helped to establish his reputation as the foremost poet of his age. He spent rest of his life mainly in Isfahan and occasionally visited other cities of Iran. He was appointed poet-laureate to Shah Abbas II (r. 1642-1666). His *Diwan* contains panegyrics dedicated to Shah Safi, Shah Abbas II and Suleiman. He had the misfortune to offend Shah Suleiman. (6) It is unlikely that Saib depended on royal patronage only for his livelihood. He was otherwise from a well-to-do family and enjoyed wider public audience in Isfahan. According to his biographer, Maliha of Samarqand, his home was one of the grandest in the entire city. (7) He also employed his own calligrapher to transcribe copies of his *Diwan*.

"In his later years, Saib appears to have retired from public life, receiving a limited number of students and literary admirers from throughout the Persian-speaking world." (8) He died in Isfahan in 1677 and was buried in a garden retreat near the Masjid-i-Lonban in Isfahan.

SAIB'S POETIC WORKS

Saib was a prolific poet and, during the course of his literary career spanning over sixty years, he compiled one of the largest *Diwans* in classical Persian. Scholars differ on the number of verses in his *Diwan* which vary from 75000 to 1,20,000 but all agree that his *Diwan* is one of the largest in classical Persian.

He also composed a *mesnavi* on Shah Abbas II's conquest of Qandahar in about 1641, which is known as *Qandahar-Nameh* or *Abbas-Nameh*. He also wrote many *qasidas*, or panegyric odes, and about fifty of them have survived. As earlier mentioned, some of these are dedicated to Shah Safi, Abbas II and Suleiman, besides his major patrons in India during his stay in the subcontinent. He had the misfortune to offend Suleiman when court patronage was denied to him. His *qasidas* provide good documentary evidence not only to his life, but also to the prevailing conditions in Iran and India. By far the bulk of Saib's literary output consists of *ghazals*. According to Paul Losensky, "Qaharman's edition of the *Diwan* contains over 7000 *ghazals* (including some twenty poems in Turkish dialect of his native Tabriz), as well as a couple of hundred isolated verses from poems no longer extant in their entirety." (9)

Though Saib tried his hand at all kinds of poetry, it was in *ghazals* that he excelled. His *ghazals* generally tend to run longer than the classical norm and he is best known for his figures of thought. He has frequently referred to his *Sheva-i-Taza* or "Fresh Style" and boasts of its *maniye - begana*, or unfamiliar/alien conceit, *maniye-rangin*, or colourful/variegated idea, and *mazmun-i-barjasta*, or outstanding conceit. (10) He is particularly renowned for a poetic device whereby one half of the verse is adduced to support it in the other half, such as,

"When a man grows old his greed grows young
Sleep grows heavy just before the dawn."

This technique produced a compound metaphor and, in due course of time, achieved the status of proverb. (11)

As earlier mentioned, Saib excelled in *ghazals* which he could compose with great ease. He was a ready wit. This ability of Saib gave rise to many stories in the *tazkira* literature about his completing other's verses on the spur of the moment, and is generally known as *pesh-misra rasandan*. In an instance quoted by E.G. Brown one of Saib's students presented him with a hemistich, or *misra-i-awwal* as follows –

از شیشه بی مئی مئی بی شیشه طلب کن

(Tr.) "Seek for the bottomless wine from the wineless bottle"

Saib is said to have immediately capped it with the following –

حق را ز دل خالی از اندیشه طلب کن

(Tr.) "Seek for the truth from the heart which is empty of thought. (12)

On another occasion one of his friends brought to Saib the following hemistich and invited him to complete the verse –

دویدن، رفتن، استادان، خفتن و مردن

Saib immediately prefixed the following hemistich and completed the verse –

بقدر هر سکون راحت بود بنگر تفاوت را

So that the translation of the completed verse runs thus –

"Peace is in proportion to every pause : observe the difference

Between 'to run, to walk, to stand, to sit, to lie, to die.'"(13)

It is for this reason that some of the modern scholars, such as Gholam Husayn Yosufi, endorse the view about Saib's ability to create new images and metaphors has placed him among the outstanding poets in Persian literature. (14) Paul Losensky says, "Poetic inspiration seemed to come to him (Saib) unbidden through *feyz* or divine emanation, revealing often unpredictable connections between objects of material world as manifestations of a cosmic unity of being." (15)

SAIB'S INDIA CONNECTION

In the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, all talented Persian poets, who found appreciation of their talent was withheld in their own country under the Safawids, were attracted to India for better opportunities to exhibit their talent and to improve their prospects under the liberal patronage provided by the Mughal court. A large number of them came to India, most notable of them were: Ghazali Mashhadi (d.1572), Urfi (d.1592), Naziri Nishapuri (d.1618), Talib Amuli (d.1628), Qudsi Mashhadi (d.1656), Abu Talib Kalim (d.1650), and Saib Tabrizi (c 1592/1601-1677). Saib spent nearly nine years in the subcontinent and went back to Isfahan and became the poet-laureate to Shah Abbas Safawi II (r. 1642-1666). (16)

Before setting off for India in 1624, Saib Tabrizi said –

هم چو عزم سفر دهند که در هر دل هست
رقص سودای تو در هیچ سری نیست که نیست

(Tr.) "There is no head wherein desire for thee danceth
not

Even as the determination to visit India is in every
heart."(17)

Saib came to India in 1624 for furtherance of his literary career. His first patron was the young Mughal governor of Kabul, Mirza Ahsanullah Zafar Khan. Kabul was then a part of the Indian empire of the Mughals. A close friendship was forged between Zafar Khan and Saib, and Zafar Khan remained Saib's, primary patron for the next several years and Saib, in return, acted as the governor's mentor in his poetic art. Zafar Khan used to compose poetry under the pen-name of "Ahsan". (18) He remained in Kabul for about three years where he composed his now famous "Ode to Kabul". This poem is translated into English by Dr. Josephine Barry Davis and I quote this translated poem here –

KABUL

Ah! How beautiful is Kabul encircled by her arid mountains
And Rose, of the trials of thorns she envies
Her gusts powdered soil, slightly sting my eyes
But I love her, for knowing and loving are born of this
same dust.

My song exalts her dazzling tulips
And at the beauty of her trees, I blush
How sparkling the water flows from Pul-i-Mastaan!
May Allah protect such beauty from the evil eye of man!

Khizr chose the path to Kabul in order to reach Paradise
For her mountains brought him close to the delights of heaven
From the fort with sprawling wall, A Dragon of protection

Each stone is there more precious than the treasure of Shayagan.

Every street of Kabul is enthralling to the eye
Through the bazaars, caravans of Egypt pass
One could not count the moons that shimmer on her roofs
And the thousand splendid suns that hide behind her walls.

Her laughter of mornings has the gaiety of flowers
Her nights of darkness, the reflections of lustrous hair
Her melodious nightingales, with passion sing their songs
Ardent tunes, as leaves enflamed, cascading from their throats.

And I, I sing in the gardens of Jahanara, of Sharbara
And even the trumpets of heaven envy their green pastures.

Through the imagery of suns and moons, the lines in this ode evoke a feeling of timelessness and a connection to the mythology of ancient Iran as well as a heavenly beauty that stands in poignant contrast with the rubble and blood of the city at war. The moons and the suns may be interpreted as the citizens of Kabul: with the male head of each household represented by a shimmering moon on its roof. The reference to "a thousand splendid suns that hide behind her walls", likewise, refers to the women of Kabul, glowing beauties, tantalizingly hidden from the outside world but nonetheless providing vital life-giving warmth to Afghan society. This is very much inherent in Afghan ethos.

This poem of Saib Tabrizi has received much appreciation and accolades from all the sections of Afghan society, especially from Afghan literati living in exile, and has become extremely relevant since 1970's and is often recited by them with nostalgia. This particular poem has given rise to a lot of modern Afghan

literature composed by poets and writers in Afghanistan as well as those living in exile.

It was in 1632 that Zafar Khan was appointed to the governorship of Kashmir and Saib went with him there. In those days, Persian poetic horizon was dominated by Mulla Muhammad Tahir Ghani (d.1669), popularly known as Ghani Kashmiri, who is arguably the greatest Persian poet of Kashmir and one of its literary and cultural icons. Highly popular in India and the larger Persian – speaking world, Ghani influenced many generations of Persian and Urdu poets in India. His forte was in the remarkable use of language to create poems with multiple layers of meaning. This along with his versatility in creating delightful metaphors and images, makes him one of the few medieval poets of India with a striking appeal to the modern reader. His poetry is known for wit and ingenuity to capture wide spectrum of moods – satirical, playful, pessimistic and mystically resigned. “Indian Style” of poetry reached its peak. His highly polished gnomic poetry made a significant impact on Saib.

There is an interesting anecdote to Saib’s meeting with Ghani who held the latter in high esteem for his philosophic thoughts, and is quoted here –

“On his arrival, the Iranian poet went a number of times to meet Ghani but was disappointed to find the doors of his house locked.

On one occasion he found the doors open and went inside to find the house empty. When at last Saib succeeded in meeting Ghani, he enquired about the philosophy of locking the door while Ghani himself was inside the house and

keeping it open when he was away. At this Ghani is believed to have said: “I am the only treasure in this house. In order to protect this treasure the doors have to be locked. Once the treasure is not in the house there is no need to lock its doors”. The Iranian poet was deeply impressed by this reply and eulogized Ghani Kashmiri for his wit and intelligence.” (19)

Allama Iqbal also refers to this incident in his *Payam-i-Mashriq*.

“Unable to understand the meaning of a famous verse – in which Ghani had intermingled both Persian and Kashmiri words – Mirza Ali Saib of Tabriz wanted to understand the meaning of it and came to meet him. The verse was

*Moi miana tu shuda kraalpan
Karda juda kasai sar ze tun*

(In this the word *Kraalpan* in Kashmiri means “Potter’s thread” which was incomprehensible to Mirza Ali Saib so he came to Ghani to fathom the depth of this distich

When explained the meaning, Saib was simply enthralled.)

(Tr.) “Like the potter’s thread, your tresses made me dazed and senseless

Severing the head (pot) from the body (lump of clay)” (20)

According to the *Tazkira Majma ul-Fusaha* of Riza Quli Khan Hedayat, Saib was so fond of Ghani’s verses that when he came back to Isfahan he would often ask people visiting Iran from India what gift they had brought him, meaning, of course, some verses of Ghani. (21)

During his stay in the Indian subcontinent, Saib visited many literary centres such as Burhanpur, Agra, Delhi and Kashmir and came in contact with Persian poets and writers. He imbibed the best of "Indian Style" of poetry, or *Sabq-i-Hindi*, which had developed the conceptual refinement as a result of existence in India of highly abstruse mystical background combined with typically courtly literary activity. His stay in India sharpened his wit, a keen appreciation of philosophical and intellectual exercise, and an ability for the aphorism and the proverb. All these attributes stood him in good stead when he was appointed poet-laureate to Shah Abbas II in Isfahan. The poetry composed by him came to be known as "The Isfahani Style" which was just another name of the "Indian Style", or *Sabq-i-Hindi*.

SAIB'S DEBT TO EARLIER MASTERS

The most remarkable thing about Saib is that he was extremely generous in acknowledging his debt to his literary peers and predecessors. He mentions about seventy different poets by name in his *ghazals*, most often at the end of a response, or *jawab*, in homage of an earlier poem. He was a great admirer and has mentioned, most frequently, Rumi and Hafiz. In *ghazals* he puts Naziri Nishapuri not only above himself, but also Urfi. (22) Saib has left a record of his reading in his personal anthology of poetry, his *safina* or *bayaz*. (23)

CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

In all the *Tazkiras* written after Saib, there seems to be an unmitigated adulation of his poetry. His contemporary Muhammed Tahir Nasrabadi writes simply that "the sublimity of his genius and extent of his fame need no description." (24)

In India a few years later, Sarkhosh writes that Saib's "Jewel-like verses have broadcast his fame throughout the world", reporting that the Safawid Shah sent copies of his *Diwan* as gifts to rulers in other parts of the Islamic world. (25) Shortly after poet's death, Maliha of Samarqand has given a moving account of his pilgrimage to Saib's tomb in which he has also praised the poet. (26) In the entire Persian speaking world the praise of Saib's literary achievement continued unabated throughout the nineteenth century reaching its fullest expression in the writings of Azad Bilgrami in *Khazana-i-Amera*. (27)

In Iran, the late eighteenth century saw the development of *Bazgasht-i-Adab*, or "Literary Return", movement which started rejecting the values of its immediate predecessors and with a view to denigrate "Indian Style" of Persian poetry. It started on a low key but gradually reached a crescendo by the middle of the nineteenth century when Reza Quli Khan Hedayat said that Saib wrote in "a strange style that is not now approved." (28) Then in late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries Bahar in *Sabk-i-Shenasi* completely dismissed Saib and his style. (29)

It was in the twentieth century that *Bazgasht-i-Adabi* movement itself came under critical assessment and came to disrepute with the fall of the Qajars and the rise of modernism in Iran. Once again Saib's, as well as seventeenth century poetry, in general, began to be re-evaluated. Notable scholars who accomplished this task among others were: poet-scholar Karim Amiri Firuzkuhi and the literary historian Zeyn-al Abedin Mo'taman, and once again Saib and his poetry were restored to the canon of classical poetry so much so that for this purpose a conference was held at the University of Tehran in 1976 and attended by major literary figures of the day.

In the final assessment, Zabiullah Safa maintains that "in reality, Saib is a powerful poet in the *ghazal* and although he wrote a great deal, his language is seldom open to criticism, is solid, in accordance with the criteria of eloquence, and full of subtle ideas, delicate thoughts, and graceful images." While concluding Safa says that Saib's poetry has "distinctive splendour" insofar as social, gnomic, mystical, and social observations in his *ghazals* are concerned. (30)

SELECTED VERSES FROM SAIB

I transcribe hereunder some of the selected verses of Saib out of the selections made by E.G. Browne (31) from *Kharabat* (32) with their translation in English by E.G. Browne.

چو شد ز هر عادت مضرت نبخشد
بمرگ آشنا کن بتدریج جان را
When poison becomes a habit it ceases to injure:
Make thy soul gradually acquainted with death.

سبحه بر کف توبه بر لب دل پر از شوق گناه
معصیت را خنده می آید ز استغفار ما

The rosary in the hand, repentance on the lips, and the heart full of sinful longings –

Sin itself laughs at our repentance!

گفتگوی کفر و دین آخر یکجای می کشد

خواب يك خوابست اما مختلف تعبیرها

All this talk of infidelity and religion finally leads to one lace:
The dream is the same dream, only the interpretations differ.

از تیر آه مظلوم ظالم امان نیابد
پیش از نشانه خیزد از دل فغان کمان را

The tyrant finds no security against the arrows of the victim's sighs:
Groans arise from the heart of the bow before (they arise from) the target.

چاره ناخوشی وضع جهان بی خبر است
اوست بی دار که در خواب گرانست این جا

The cure for the unpleasant constitution of the world is to ignore it:
Here he is awake who is plunged in heavy sleep.

ساده لوحان زود می گیرند رنگ هم نشین
صحبت طوطی سخن ور می کند آئینه را

The simple-minded quickly acquire the colour of their companions:
The conversation of the parrot makes the mirror (seem to) speak.

موج از حقیقت که بحر غافلست
حادث چگونه درک نماید قدیم را

The wave is ignorant of the true nature of the sea:
How can the Temporal comprehend the Eternal?

معیار دوستان دغل روز حاجت
قرضی برسم تجربه از دوستان طلب

The touchstone of false friends is the day of need:
By way of proof, ask a loan from your friends.

هستی دنیای فانی انتظار مردنست
ترك هستی ز انتظار نیستی وارستن است

The life of this transitory world is the expectation of death:
To renounce life is to escape from the expectation of annihilation.

ترا ز جان غم مال ای عزیز بیشترست
علاقه تو بدستار بیشتر ز سرست

O my friend! Thou hast more care for wealth than for life:
The attachment to the turban is greater than to the head.

گریه شمع از برای ماتم پروانه نیست
صبح نزدیکست در فکر شب تار خودست

The weeping of the candle is not in mourning for the moth:
The dawn is at hand and it is thinking of its own dark night.

آدمی پیر چو شد حرص جوان می گردد
خواب در وقت سحرگاه گران می گردد

When a man becomes old his greed becomes young:
Sleep grows heavy at the time of morning.

از پشیمانی سخن در عهد پیری می زنم
لب بدندان می زنم اکنون که دندانم نماند
I talk of repentance in the days of old age;
I bite my lip (in remorse) now that no teeth remain to me.

درون خانه خود هر گدا شهنشاهیست
قدم برون منه از حد خویش و سلطان باش

Within his own house every beggar is an emperor:
Do not overstep thine own limit and be a king.

حریص را نکند نعمت دو عالم سیر
همیشه آتش سوزنده اشتها دارد

The enjoyments of both worlds will not satisfy the greedy man:

Burning fire has always an appetite.

پیرانه سر همای سعادت بمن رسید
وقت زوال سایه دولت بمن رسید
شد مهربان سهر بمن آخر حیات
در وقت صبح خواب فراغت بمن رسید

The *huma* of happiness came to me in old age;
The shadow of fortune came to me at the time of (the

sun's) decline:

Heaven became kind to me at the close of my life;

Peaceful slumber visited me at morning-time.

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42. In this the crucial account of Saib in Maliha Samarqandi is discussed. (Paul Losensky, *op.cit.*)
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BEDIL DEHLAVI

**MAULANA ABUL-MA'ANI MIRZA ABDUL QADIR
BEDIL (1642-1721)**

**THE FOREMOST POET OF LATER PHASE OF INDIAN
STYLE PERSIAN**

A B S T R A C T

Maulana Abul Ma'ani Mirza Abdul Qadir Bedil bin Abdul Khalaq Arlas (1644-1721), also known as Bedil Dehlavi, the foremost representative of the later phase of the "Indian Style", or *Sabq-i-Hindi*, of Indo-Persian poetry, was one of the most difficult and challenging poets of that school. Having been brought up in a mixed religious environment, he had more tolerant views than most of his poetic contemporaries. He preferred free-thought to accepting the established beliefs in his times, siding with the common people and rejecting the orthodox clergy whom he often saw as corrupt. He came early under the influence of the Sufis and syncretic beliefs and stayed away from court culture. He evolved a new, highly obtuse style of Persian poetry which was at once mystical and rational, beguiling and yet not fully comprehensible. He influenced many poets of Persian, including some Hindu, who got associated with the circle formed around him in Delhi. (1)

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Mirza Abdul Qadir Bedil, son of Abdul Khalaq Arlas, was born in Azimabad (Patna) in Bihar in 1644. His family traced its descent from Arlas tribe of Turkish Chaghtai origin, which had migrated from Badakshan, now in Afghanistan, to live under the Mughals in India. Since he grew up in Azimabad

he knew Urdu, then known as *rekhta*, Bengali, Sanskrit and Turkish, and learned Persian and Arabic in a *madrassa*. (2) His parents died when he was very young and he was entrusted to the care of his uncle, Mirza Qalandar, who was a Persian poet of modest talent. It was through his uncle that Bedil came into contact with some of the renowned Sufis of his time, whose influence left a profound impact on young Bedil which, later on, when he grew up, greatly moulded his personality and gave a direction to his poetry. He started composing his poems when he was barely 10 years old. (3) He then studied the classical Persian poets and, following their example, himself became an accomplished poet; at the same time, continuing to imbibe the rich heritage of Sufism. He first wrote in the style of old master-poets of Persian but, after moving to Delhi in or about 1664, he began to write more and more in the "Indian Style", also known as *Sabq-i-Hindi*. He served in the army of Muhammad Azam, the Mughal governor, but quit his job rather than writing *qasidas* (panegyrics) in praise of the prince when asked to do so, though he maintained cordial relations with several nobles of the court. (4)

Bedil travelled widely in India, encountering learned men of different faiths, including many Hindus, and became very tolerant towards people of other faiths. He became well-acquainted with Hindu philosophical thought. Bedil came back to Delhi, married and settled there and began to write verses. He formed a circle of students, in which there were many Hindus also, who continued the traditions of his legacy even after him.

Upon his emergence as a poet of Persian, Bedil gained recognition throughout the Persian cultural continent and came to be referred to as a great exponent of Persian poetry of "Indian Style", also known as *Sabq-i-Hindi*. He died in Delhi in 1721

and his tomb was repeatedly desecrated and looted following the invasion of Delhi by Nadir Shah, the Marathas, and the Afghans. The tomb which is now known as his is of very recent origin. (5) Some Afghan scholars, lovers of Bedil's poetry, such as Ustad Mohamed Daoud Al Hossaini, an Afghan Bedil expert, claim that seven months after his funeral, Bedil's body was brought back by his friends from Delhi to Khwaja Rawash in Kabul and was buried there. This would appear to be more a figment of their imagination than factual, and can be dismissed.

BEDIL'S WORKS

Bedil's works are accurately preserved. The latest edition of his *Kulliyat*, published in Kabul between 1962 and 1965, comprises of three volumes of poetry and one of prose. In poetry, he wrote *ghazals* (lyrics), *qasidas* (panegyrics) and *mesnavis*, and in prose he wrote an autobiography, statements and *ruqa'at*, which are discussed here.

GHAZALS (LYRICS)

The *ghazals*, or lyrics, of Bedil are both mystical and passionate, and considered among the best in the Indo-Persian literary tradition. According to Moazzam Siddiqi, only Amir Khusrow equals Bedil in quality. (6) All *ghazals* of Bedil have pervasive undercurrent of skepticism which prevents the reader from experiencing the kind of ecstasy or exuberance imparted by reading of *ghazals* of other master-poets of Persian. Siddiqi further asserts that "the trend toward intellectualization of imagery and obfuscation of expression found in his predecessors culminated in Bedil's *ghazals*. His ideas and similes, metaphors, and constructions all convey a highly intricate cerebral

formalism to the point of departing from the basic *ghazal* form, and the range of subject matter is such that many poems require both training and imagination to be understood." It is, perhaps, for this reason that Bedil's poetry is considered as one of the most difficult and challenging in the entire Indo-Persian literature.

QASIDAS (PANEGRYRICS)

Bedil wrote just a few *qasidas* (panegyrics). He mainly wrote *qasidas* to express gratitude and not for the sake of seeking reward or recognition, as was the practice with most of the poets of his time. In fact, his long *qasidas* are in praise of the Prophet and his son-in-law Imam Ali in which Bedil has followed the pattern of Khaqani Sherwani. (7)

MESNAVIS

Bedil wrote four *mesnavis* which are characterized by mystical thought balanced by artful rhetoric. They are briefly described here.

1. MOHIT-I-AZAM: Translated into English would mean "The Greatest Ocean". This was written by Bedil in 1667. It has a brief preface in the style of Mulla Zahuri's *Saqi-Nama*. (8) In this book, Bedil has described the development of the created world in eight chapters on the pattern of Ibnul Arabi's *Fususul Hikam*, and he has also followed Ibnul Arabi's doctrine of *Wahdatul Wujud*, or Unity of Existence, in illustrating how the universe, which is not distinct from the pre-eternal Divine Essence, comes into fermentation and finally develops into man.

2. TALISM-I-HAYRAT: Translated into English would mean "The Talisman of Bewilderment." This was composed by Bedil in 1669. It is an allegorical *mesnawi* discussing the essence and

attributes of God, the scheme of creation, as well as man's physical and spiritual existence. According to Moazzam Siddiqi, the format of this *mesnavi* follows Fariduddin Attar's *Mantiq al-Tayr*, and, like the latter, focusses on the ambivalent relationship of the soul to the body, elaborating the different faculties that serve the soul, the causes of troubles, and the ways these troubles can be alleviated.

3. TOOR-I-MA'ARFAT: Translated into English would mean "The Sanai of Gnosis". This was written by Bedil in 1687-88, in the mountains of Bairat, in Central India. Bedil is said to have gone there along with his lifelong friend and associate, Nawab Shukar Allah Khan, a Mughal governor. This *mesnavi* depicts the Bairat mountains during the monsoon rains which provides a great vista and relief to the parched soul.

4. IRFAN: Translated into English would mean "Gnosis". This *mesnavi* is the longest and most celebrated poetic work of Bedil, which was written in 1712. This *mesnavi* dwells on mystical and philosophical subjects, particularly the intermingling of pre-existent soul with lower material world and its upward progress culminating in the birth of man. It presents Bedil's complex philosophy and counts among the most intellectual mystical poems in Persian literature. (10)

In this work, Bedil has also discussed certain Hindu beliefs and practices, such as the transmigration of soul (*Sansara*), and the self-immolation of widows (*Sati*). In *Irfan*, Bedil introduces many of the anecdotes from the Indian milieu, in which the romance of Kamadi and Madan has been studied in detail by some of the Soviet scholars and emulated by Tajik poets. (11)

HIS PROSE WORKS

In prose, Bedil has written *Chahar Unsor*, *Ruqa'at* and *Nikat*, which are briefly discussed here.

CHAHAR UNSOR: Translated into English would mean "The Four Elements". This is an autobiographical work in rhymed prose, interspersed with *ghazals*, *rubaiyyat*, *mesnavis* and *qattas*, and was written by Bedil between 1682 and 1694. The book consists of a short preface and four chapters – corresponding to four elements, namely, air, water, fire, and earth – each chapter is focused in a general way on an aspect of his life.

In the first chapter he describes meetings with a number of Sufis and *derveshes* during his youth; in the second chapter, he deals with his own poetry and the art of poetry, in general; in the third chapter, he discusses a number of metaphysical, theological, philosophical, and Sufi topics; and in the fourth chapter, he recounts the wonders of his time and events of his own life.

What emerges is the self-portrait of an extraordinary person gifted since boyhood with unusual spiritual power and perception. (12)

Sharif Husain Qasemi, a scholar of Indo-Persian literature, sums up that "*Chahar Onsor* is the most reliable source on Bedil's career and helps to clear up much of confusion about his life in accounts by contemporary and later biographers". (13) It contains particular details of his early life, his extensive travels, and his contacts with Sufis who were responsible for shaping his career. Many contemporary historical events have also been stated and the work also lends additional value as a historical document. The prose style is difficult but ornate.

RUQA'AT: translated into English would mean "Letters". These are collection of Bedil's correspondence with his life-long friend Nawab Shukr Allah Khan and other Mughal officials, his teacher Abdul Aziz Izzat, and his own students, among them Nizam-ul-Mulk Asif Jah, the founder of Asafjahi dynasty in Hyderabad.

NIKAT: Translated into English would mean "statements". The statements of Bedil are interspersed with *ghazals*, *rubaiyyat*, *qattas*, *mesnavis* and *mukhammases* and deal mainly with philosophical, mystical and theosophical subjects. Moazzam Siddiqi feels that in these statements some of the poetry "skirts social and satirical themes as well." (14)

ANALYSIS OF BEDIL'S WRITINGS

Bedil preferred free thought to accepting the established beliefs which was the outcome of his coming into contact with Sufis and syncretic beliefs in the formative period of his life. As he grew up he had considerably more tolerant views than most of his contemporaries. "Bedil wrote extensively – poetry, philosophy, wisdom stories (fables) and riddles. He advocated religious tolerance and staunchly believed in *Wahdatul Wujud* (Unity of Existence) doctrine of Ibnul Arabi. Because of his poetic talent and liberal outlook, Bedil gained recognition throughout the Iranian cultural continent especially in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, besides Iran and the Indian sub-continent. In Afghanistan, in particular, a unique school of poetry is dedicated to Bedil's poetry and is called "*Bedil Shinasi*". (15)

IMPORTANCE OF BEDIL

Bedil is primarily important in Indo-Persian literature because he refined classical Persian and early Indo-Persian poetry in order to suit the circumstances of the era in which he lived. His poetry is characterized by a restless effort to comprehend the enigma of existence. According to Moazzam Siddiqi, "This quality of ennui lends it a dynamism and also universalism; not only man but other forms of existence as well are in a constant state of upward journeying, not only the road but also the station are travelling. There is undoubtedly a proto-existentialist element in his poetry, which has led some critics to characterize him as a forerunner of French existentialism". (16)

We find in Bedil's poetry the culmination of various tendencies: he turned his attention to the basic problems of human existence and channeled his poetic genius in the direction of discovering truth through inward contemplation. Typically of his mysticism was a progressive attitude towards life that was combined with, and inseparable from, a profound philosophical skepticism, very similar to Indian syncretic thought then prevailing, which influenced modern poets in the sub-continent, such as Asadullah Khan Ghalib (1797-1869) and Muhammad Iqbal (1873-1938), in discussing with new vigour and freshness traditional Sufi topics, as for example, the origin of man, the creation of the world, and the relationship with God, the Universe and Man.

The poetry and style of Bedil also reflect his complex and multi-faceted personality. His early poetry is devoid of any formalism that came to predominate his later composition. "Yet it is Bedil's predilection for ambiguity bordering on obfuscation that made him a great mystic as well as a great poet." (17) In spite of the fact that there is opaqueness in Bedil's style, his

verse is balanced by folk spirit, reflected in the use of many colloquial Indian words and expressions. Broadly viewed, this was the general trend in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. He often described in accurate details natural phenomena, plants, and animals – subjects seldom mentioned in classical or Indo-Persian poetical texts, in order to derive both mystical as well as moral conclusions. In all these facts lies the importance of Bedil.

BEDIL'S LEGACY AND INFLUENCE

The extent of influence of Bedil on Indo-Persian, Urdu, Afghan and Tajik literatures is beyond measure. It seems to have advanced with every succeeding generation of poets and writers from the beginning of the 19th century, especially in Central Asia. As early as the last quarter of the 18th century, imitation of Bedil's poetry and prose had become commonplace throughout Transoxiana. His works were included in the basic textbooks in schools and his poems found way into folk poetry and were sung by bards and *hafizes*. His influence continued even in early 20th century, so much so Sadruddin Ayni (1878-1954), a Tajik poet and writer, an admirer of the classical Khurasani style of Persian poetry, wrote *ghazals* after the manner of Bedil at the beginning of his literary career. (18)

IN AFGHANISTAN

In Afghanistan, where, it is said, Bedil is more appreciated than even Hafiz, his influence continues to persist as a vital, pervasive force in rural as well as urban literary circles; branches of his cultic group meet weekly to recite his poems and discuss the verses and philosophical discourses of Bedil – *Bedil*

Khwani. His poetry has also come to play a major role in Afghan classical music.

IN IRAN

Like everywhere else in the Persian cultural continent, Bedil's poetry was greatly appreciated in Iran in the early stages. Since late 18th century, when *Bazghasht-i-Adabi* movement commenced in Iran, *Sabq-i-Hindi* or "The Indian Style" of poetry, which had loomed large on the consciousness of Iranian poets and writers, was relegated to a secondary position, and, consequently, poetry of Bedil lost its position among the Iranians, while it was much welcomed in Afghanistan and other Central Asian Countries. Bedil has come to prominence even in Iran from 1980. Literary critics in Iran, such as Muhammad-i-Reza Shafiai – Kadkani (b.1939) and Shams Langrudi (b.1950) (19) were instrumental in Bedil's re-emergence in Iran. So much so, Iran sponsored two international conferences on Bedil.

IN INDIA

If must be admitted that influence of Bedil in India, his homeland, has been less noticeable. Yet his verses have played a vital role in moulding Urdu poetry and transferring entire legacy of "The Indian Style" of Persian into Urdu. His influence on poets, such as Ghalib, Iqbal and others, is more intellectual than literary. His influence on Iqbal is mainly discernible in latter's philosophy of Ego. In spite of all this, his influence has not been as much as it merits. More serious work is required to be done in this respect in which direction our young scholars of Persian have to pay particular attention.

In conclusion, I would like to state that Bedil, in his poetry and prose writing, combined a remarkable degree of *tasawwaf*

and sycretic beliefs, superb mastery of Persian, especially in his verse, and also transcended the traditional mould of Indo-Persian literature. Bedil, along with Nasir Ali Sirhindi (1638-1697), must be considered one of the pivotal figures in the intellectual and literary history of Mughal India. Both these poets were not only proud but also sensitive to the accomplishments of the Mughal era Persian poets and emphasized the difference between Indian diction and that which found favour with the Iranians, and Nasir Ali Sirhindi, in particular, boastfully declared; "The Iranian nightingale possessed little (comparable) to the grandeur of the Indian peacock." (20)

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2. Moazzam Siddiqi, "Bedil, Abd-al-Qader (Bedil)", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 1989. A comprehensive account about Bedil is mentioned in this article which has also discussed, in detail, Bedil's writings.
3. This, Bedil has mentioned in *Chahar Unsor*, p.116.
4. Moazzam Siddiqi, *op.cit.*
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Khaqani Sherwani (1121-1190) was born in Shirwan and died in Tabriz. He wrote *Na'at* in praise of Prophet Muhammad when his literary

talent was at its peak which was greatly appreciated in the Persian-speaking world.

8. Mulla Zahuri (d.1618) was an Iranian poet who first settled down in Ahmadnagar under Sultan Murtaza Shah and later on went to Bijapur in the court of Sultan Adil Shah II. He wrote *Saqi-Nama* based on the model of *Gulistan* of Sheikh Sa'di. (Refer to Chopra, *op.cit.*, pp.255-6)
9. Bairat is an ancient town north of Jaipur, whose reference is made in the *Mahabharata* when it was known as 'Viratnagar'.
10. Mouzzam Siddiqi, *op.cit.*
11. Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature*, pp.515-60.
12. Sharif Husain Qasemi, "Chahar Onsor" (Four Elements), 1990, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.
13. Ibid.
14. Moazzam Siddiqi, *op.cit.*
15. Chopra, *op.cit.*, p.71.
16. Moazzam Siddiqi, *op.cit.*
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18. Rypka, *op.cit.*, p.535.
19. Both these critics are also contemporary Iranian poets and writers.
20. Chopra, *op.cit.*, p.71. Also refer to an article of M. Alam in "Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia" edited by Sheldon I. Pollock.

QA'ANI SIRAZI

MIRZA HABIBULLAH QA'ANI SHIRAZI (1808-1854):

THE LAST CLASSICAL POET OF PERSIAN

ABSTRACT

Poetry is the great art of Iran. In Persian literature poetry is given pride of place. Iran produced its classical poets and writers between the ninth and fifteenth centuries who have not only given refined expressions of thoughts and sentiments; (1) but have also enriched the Persian language and literature and have left an indelible impress of their wide-spread influence on the literatures of the world. (2) The last poet of Persian literature whose poetic compositions were in the classical mould, who belonged to the neo-classical *Bazgasht* period, and who displayed the traditional glamorous artistry was undoubtedly Mirza Habibullah Qa'ani Shirazi (1808-1854). (3)

QA'ANI AND BAZGASHT-I-ADABI

Qa'ani Shirazi was one of Iran's leading poets in the first half of the nineteenth century and one of the leaders and chief exponents of *Bazgasht-i-Adabi* movement. (4) The *Bazgasht-i-Adabi*, or "Literary Return", was an Iranian movement that had, in fact, begun in the middle of the eighteenth century and continued through the Constitutional Revolution in the early twentieth century. The underlying idea in this movement was to retreat from the florid, verbose and pedantic style of Persian poetry, which is also known as Indian Style, or *Sabq-i-Hindi*, or Isfahani Style of poetry that had become popular and dominated the Safawid in Iran and Mughal in India eras, and

go back to pre-Mongol eras. Because of the melody and sweetness of his poetry, Qa'ani Shirazi was hailed as the last classical poet in Iran and the most outstanding since Jami (d.1492), and also as Iran's most brilliant and melodious poet.(5)

Here I would like to mention that nothing produced after poet Jami (d.1492) or before the Safawid poet Saib (d.1678), who spent more than eight years in India, was deemed to be of any literary value in Iran. The reasons for this rejection in the eighteenth century are unclear, but by the late nineteenth century this rejection of Safawid and the Mughal era poetry and return to "classical styles" had acquired a name: *Bazgasht-i-Adabi*, or "Literary Return". The person who named this literary movement and who finally defined its purpose was Malek us-Sho'ara Bahar (d.1951). He did this in a series of articles which appeared in the magazine *Armaghan* (Gift) in 1932 and 1933. This apparently was prompted by strong moral ethics and national interests according to Iranian literati, but, according to Indian Persian scholars and literati, Indian Style or *Sabq-i-Hindi* had loomed large enough in the historical consciousness of the Iranians and, therefore, it was mainly for nationalistic considerations and to consign Indian Style or *Sabq-i-Hindi* to oblivion in Iran.

BRIEF LIFE-SKETCH

Qa'ani was born in Shiraz in 1808. His father, Mirza Muhammad Ali, was also a poet who wrote under the pen-name of Gulshan. Qa'ani is believed to have spent most of his early life at Shiraz. His proper name was Habib, under which he originally wrote, and which he used as his *takhallus* in many of his earlier poems. Later when he attached himself to Hassan

Ali Mirza, who was for some time governor of Khurasan and Kirman, that prince changed his pen-name to Qa'ani.

Qa'ani was educated in Shiraz and Isfahan and lived in various Iranian towns before settling in Tehran, where he entered the service of Nasiruddin Shah Qajar (r.1848-96) as a panegyrist. He was one of those Iranian poets who had felt the increased sensitivity to the social environments. He was also one of the first Qajar era poets to learn French.

He revived the full fire-and-water refrain posing this question in the opening line of one of his poems –

Chih gawahar ast kih hast I'tibar-i-atash u ab?

Chih jawhar ast kih zibad nigar – i atash u ab ?

(Tr.) What elements are there as respected as fire and water ?

What jewel is there that can adorn the beloved whose name is “fire and water” ? (6)

(Fire and Water – the former has the quality of fluidity and the latter of forcefulness. Fire is also interpreted as Passion and Water as Love in Persian Poetry. ‘Fire and Water’ duality is Passion in our work and Love or kindness in our hearts.)

In his *Kitab-i-Parishan* (Book of Melancholy), which he completed when thirty years old, written in the tradition of *Gulistan* of Sheikh Sa'di, Qa'ani has attempted to find themes in reality of everyday occurrences and to faults and defects in the social order of the time, such as, hypocrisy of the priesthood and magistrates, corruption of police, swindling on the parts of artisans, etc. (7) He has also included many Machiavellian counsels to kings and Princes.

QA'ANI'S MARSIYA (ELEGY)

His famous *marsiya* (elegy) is considered the most popular tribute to Imam Husain written by an Iranian poet. This famous elegy, because of its originality, form, and generally irreligious character, is widely popular and is inscribed on the walls of one of the *Riwaqs* (Porches) known as *Dar al-Faiz* in *Nastaliq* script in the holy shrine of Imam Ali Reza in Mashhad, Iran. Although considered to be the last classical poets, Qa'ani, in this tribute, breaks with the tradition of explanatory poetry and pays his tribute to the beloved Imam in the form of question and answer or a dialogue.

This heart rending elegy was translated into English by the famous British Orientalist Edward G. Browne in his monumental book, *A Literary History of Persia* (in Four Volumes). Recalling her impressions about these moving verses, Annemarie Schimmel, another noted Orientalist and Professor of Islam and Mysticism at Harvard University, wrote –

“I still remember the deep impression which the First Persian poem I ever read in connection with the tragic events of Karbala left on me. It was Qa'ani's elegy, which begins with the words:

What is raining? blood. Who? The eyes.

How? Day and night.

Why? From grief.

Grief for whom ?

Grief for the king of Karbala”.

I consider it apposite to transcribe the full text of the original in Persian and the text of English translation of Qa'ani's elegy hereunder -

بارد چه؟ خون! که؟ دیده، چسان؟ روز و شب، چرا؟
 از غم، کدام غم؟ غم سلطان کربلا،
 نامش چه بود؟ حسین، ز نژاد که؟ از علی،
 مامش که بود؟ فاطمه، جدش که؟ مصطفی،
 چون شد؟ شهید شد، یکجا؟ دشت ماریه،
 کی؟ عاشق محرم، پنهان؟ نه بر ملا،
 شب گشته شد؟ نه روز، چه هنگام؟ وقت ظهر،
 شد از گلو بریده سرش؟ نی نی از قفا،
 سیراب گشته شد؟ نه، کس آبش نداد؟ داد،
 که؟ شمر، از چه چشمه؟ ز سرچشمه فنا،
 مظلوم شد شهید؟ بلی، جرّم داشت؟ نه،
 کارش چه بُد؟ هدایه، و یارش که بُد؟ خدا،
 این ظلم را که کرد؟ یزید، این یزید کیست؟
 ز اولاد هند، از چه کس؟ از نطفه زنا،
 خود کرد این عمل؟ نه فرستاد نامه،
 نزد که؟ نزد زاده، مرجانه دغا،
 ابن زیاد زاده، مرجانه بُد؟ نعم،
 از گفته، یزید تخلف نکرد؟ لا،
 این نابکار کشت حسین را بدست خویش؟
 نه او روانه کرد سپه سوی کربلا،
 میر سپه که بُد؟ عمر سعد، او بُرید،
 خلق عزیز فاطمه؟ نه شمر بی حیا،

خنجر بُرید خنجر او را نکرد شمر؟
 کرد، از چه پس بُرید؟ نپذیرفت ازو قضا،
 بهر چه؟ بهر آنکه شود خلق را شفیع،
 شرط شفاعتش چه بود؟ نوحه و بکا،
 کس گشته شد هم از پسرانش؟ بلی دو تن،
 دیگر که؟ به نرادر، و دیگر که؟ اقربا،
 دیگر پسر نداشت؟ چرا داشت، آن که بود؟
 سجاد، چون بُد او؟ بغم و رنج میتلا،
 ماند او بکربلای پدر؟ نی بشام رفت،
 با عز و احتشام؟ نه با ذلت و عنا،
 تنها؟ نه با زنانِ حرم، نامشان چه بود،
 زینب سکنه فاطمه کثوم بی نوا،
 بر تن لباس داشت؟ بلی گرد رهگذار،
 بر سر عمامه داشت؟ بلی چوب اشقیا،
 بیمار بُد؟ بلی! چه دوا داشت؟ اشک چشم،
 بعد از دوا غذاش چه بُد؟ خون دل غذا،
 کس بود مهرش؟ بلی اطفال بی پدر،
 دیگر که بود؟ تب که نمی گشت ازو جدا،
 از زینت زنان چه بجا مانده بود؟ دو چیز،
 طوق شمر بگردن و خالخال غم پیا،
 کبر این ستم کند؟ نه، مجوس و یهود؟ نه،
 هندو؟ نه، بت پرست؟ نه، فریاد ازین جفا،
 قاتلانی است قابل این شعرا؟ بلی،
 خواهد چه؟ رحمت، از که؟ ز حق، کی؟ صف جزا،

QA'ANI'S ELEGY

What is raining ? Blood.
Who ? The eyes.
How ? Day and night.
Why ? From grief.
Grief for whom ?
Grief for the king of Karbala.

What was his name ? Hussain !
Of whose race ? Ali's.
Who was his mother ? Fatima.
Who was his grandfather ? Mustafa (PBUH)
How was it with him ? He fell a martyr !
Where ? in the Plain of Mariya/Karbala.
When ? On the tenth of Muharram.
Secretly ? No, in public !
Was he slain by night ? No, by day !
At what time ? At noontide !

Was his head severed from the throat ? No from the
nape of the neck.
Was he slain unthirsting ? No.
Did none give him to drink ? They did.
Who ? Shimr !
From what source ? From the source of Death.
Was he an innocent martyr ? yes !
Had he committed any fault ? Not.

What was his work ? Guidance !
Who was his friend ? God !
Who wrought this wrong ? Yazid.

Who is this Yazid ? One of the children of Hind.
Did he himself do this deed ? No, he sent a letter.
To whom ? To the false son of Marjana.
Was Ibn-e-Yazid the son of Marjana ? Yes !

Did he not withstand the words of Yazid ? No !
Did this wretch slay Hussein with his own hand ?
No, he dispatched an army to Karbala.
Who was the chief of the army ? Umar ibn Saad.
Did he cut down Fatima's dear folk ? No, shameless
Shimr.
Was not the dagger ashamed to cut his throat ? It was
Why then did it do so ? Destiny would not excuse it.
Wherefore ? In order that he might become an
intercessor for mankind !
What is the condition of his intercessor ? Lamentation
and weeping.

Were any of his sons also slain ? Yes, two.
Who else ? Nine brothers.
Who else ? kinsmen.
Had he no other son ? Yes, he had.
Who was that ? 'The Worshipper' (Sajjad).
How fared he ? Overwhelmed with grief and sorrow.

Did he remain at his father's Karbala ? No, he went to Syria.
In glory and honour ? No, in abasement and distress.
Alone ? No, with the women of the household.
What were their names ?
Zainab, Sakina, Fatima, and poor portionless Kulthum
Had he garments on his body ? Yes, the dust of the road.
Had he turban on his head ? Yes, the staves of the wicked ones !

Was he sick ? Yes !
 What medicine had he ? The tears of his eyes.
 What was his food after medicine ? His food was
 heart's blood.
 Did any bear him company ? Yes, the fatherless
 children.

Would a pagan practice such cruelty ? No.
 A magician or a Jew ? Not.
 A Hindu ? No.
 An idolator ? No.
 Alas for this harshness.

Is Qa'ani capable of such verses ? Yes !
 What seeks he ? Mercy !
 From whom ? From God.
 When ? In the ranks of recompense.

(Translated by Edward G. Browne in
A Literary History of Persia, Vol.IV, (1930), pp.178-81

This poem, in its marvellous style of question and answer, conveys much of the dramatic events of the feelings a pious Muslim experiences when thinking of the martyrdom of the Prophet's grandson, Husain, at the hands of the Ummayyad troops.(8)

Sacrifices are a means of reaching higher and loftier stages of life. To give away parts of one's fortune, or to sacrifice one's family enhances one's religious standing. The Quranic story of Abraham who so deeply trusted in God that he, without questioning,

was willing to sacrifice his only son, points to the importance of such sacrifice.

Even poets like Sir Muhammad Iqbal, who was a Sunni poet and philosopher, praised Husain. He saw the history of Ka'aba defined by two sacrifices, that of Ismail at the beginning, and that of Husain bin Ali in the end (*Bal-i-Jibril-Urdu* – p.92). Iqbal even praised Husain in *Ramuz-i-Bekhudi* (p.126 ff) in Persian, in the mystical vocabulary, as the imam of lovers.

QA'ANI'S OTHER COMPOSITIONS

According to orientalist E.G. Browne (Vol.IV, pp.332-33) the beauty of Qa'ani's language can naturally only be appreciated by one who can read his poems in original. In a poem written in praise of the Queen-mother (*Mahd-i-Ulya*) there is a wonderful swing and grace, as for example –

بنفشه رسته از زمین بطرف جویبارها
 ویاکسته حور عین ز زلف خویش تارها
 زسنگ اگر ندیده چه سان جهد شرارها
 ببر گهای لاله بین میان لاله زارها
 که چون شراره میجهد زسنگ کو هسارها

(Tr.) Are these violets growing from the ground on the
 brink of streams,
 Or have the houris (of Paradise) plucked strands
 from their tresses?
 If thou hast not seen how the sparks leap from the
 rook,
 Look at the petals of the red anemones in their beds

Which leap forth like sparks from the crags of the mountains.

(Browne, Vol.IV, pp.332-33)

In an other poem complaining about the times in which he lived, Qa'ani invokes two poets who lived and suffered nearly eight hundred years before him –

(Tr.) "When the earth works witchcraft and heaven plays tricks,
the mind becomes disturbed and the brain confused.....
Sometimes it contrives against Nasir Khusrow
so that he is imprisoned in Yamagan in Badakshan
At other times it strives against Masud Sa'd
So that it installs him in a Lahore prison." (9)

(This is a reference to Nasir Khusrow Qubadiyani (1004-1088 A.D.) born in Balkh, a Persian poet, philosopher, Ismaili scholar, who died in Yamagan, and Masud Sa'd Salman (1046-1121 A.D.) born in Lahore and died in Ghazni, known for *Habsiyat* (Prison-poems) and introducing *Baramasa* genre of poetic compositions in Persian).

It is said when Mirza Taki Farhani, known as Amir Kabir, was appointed to replace Mirza Aghasi as the prime minister of Iran in 1848, Qa'ani as the court appointed panegyrist, wrote an exulting poem (*qasida*) for Amir Kabir in which he denigrated his predecessor, Mirza Aghasi. The *qasida* contained the lines :

بجای ظالمی شقی نشسته عادل تقی

که مومنان متقی کنند افتخار ما

(Tr.) "In the place of an impious tyrant sits
One just and pious, of whom
the believers are exceedingly happy." (10)

When Amir Kabir heard this *qasida* he was greatly annoyed and by way of chastisement ordered to discontinue Qa'ani's handsome salary. However, with the intervention of Itiad al-Salfalanah, Qa'ani was excused and his salary restored on the conditions that he translate a French text on botany which he did.(11)

Qa'ani was a master of *qasida*, but his *qasidas* were not much more than a patiché, or musical and other medley of borrowings from the ancient masters of *qasida* writers such as Manuchehri and others. He lacked high aims and noble principles. Not only does he flatter great men while they are in power, and turn and rend them as soon as they fall into disgrace, but he is prone to indulge in the most objectionable innuendo and discredit them. In several of his earlier *qasidas* he extols the virtues and justice of Haji Mirza Aghasi, who was the prime-minister of Muhammad Shah Qajar, no sooner than he is replaced by Amir Kabir under Nasiruddin Shah Qajar, he denigrates him.

According to Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, in an article "Preservation and Presentation: Continuity and Creativity in the Contemporary Persian Qasida" contributed to *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa* (Vol.20, p.254 ed. Stefan Sperl, C.Shackle) the incident of reprimand to Qa'ani by Amir Kabir provided an opportunity to the reform-minded prime-minister to make of him a lesson for other hangers-on in the court.

This important incident also became a turning point in the social position of poets in Iran, on the one hand, and resulted in psychological disorder in Qa'ani, on the other. (12) Qa'ani did not

survive for long after that and died in 1854. From thence onward poets started looking for patronage from the people at large besides royal courts.

The poetic legacy of Qa'ani comprises a large number of *qasidas*, *ghazals*, two *mesnavis*, *rubaiyyat* and *qattas*, as well as prose work, *Kitab-i-Parishan*. (13) He had an astonishing command over various forms of poetic rendition, and has composed poetry in all kinds of metres and stanzas, long and short.

The variety initiated by Qa'ani has continued in contemporary literature. The melody and sweetness of his poetry is unique. Though given to frowning and flattery, he possessed remarkable poetic genius. (14) He is often compared to the English poet Swinburne in his mastery of various forms of verse, diction and creation of similes familiar to common life. (15)

ESTIMATE

About the poetic genius of Mirza Habibullah Qa'ani Shirazi, many encomiums have been showered, but I conclude with an excerpt of the tribute paid to him by Sir Sultan Mahomad Shah Aga Khan III, in his inaugural lecture delivered on "Hafiz and the place of Iranian Culture in the World," before the Iran Society, London U.K. (16) on November 9, 1936 wherein he has paid glowing tributes to Anwari, Nizami, Maulana Rumi, Sa'di, Qa'ani and a host of others. About Qa'ani he says –

"Whenever Iran had any breathing space from war and invasion and misery, in one form or another a national character has formed and, by the spiritual influences of its poetry, immediately turned towards the expression of appreciation and enjoyment of the eternal light within us. And during the nineteenth century one of

the very greatest poets that the Iranian race has ever produced, Qa'ani, interpreted nature with a wealth of variety, a strength and beauty, which I doubt can ever be surpassed. Let the admirers of Wordsworth and the French nature poets compare in beauty, simplicity or grandeur the finest verses of the Western masters with Qa'ani's constant descriptions and references to rain, thunder, the sky and earth, the flowers and mountains, night and day, sun, moon, and stars. If the odes had mercenary motives, if the human praise and blame which he bestowed as he went along were nearly always sincere – let us not forget the fundamental honesty of his outlook on life and the universe, the sincerity of his belief in the beauty of goodness of nature."

He further goes on to say –

"The music and joy of his verses, the sincerity of his conviction that life is great, noble and splendid experience – every minute of which is to be treasured as the greatest of God's gifts – these surely are the qualities we will find in page after page and verse after verse of his work."

Qa'ani, by all accounts, is considered to be one of the most melodious of all Persian poets. The melody and sweetness of his poetry is unique and baffle description. Hardly any other poet in Persian literature can be found to possess such a mastery of words. He was indeed the last great classical poet of Persian.

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2. Chopra, R.M., *Eminent Poetesses of Persian*, Iran Society, 2010, p.2

3. Kuiper, Kathleen, *Islamic Art, Literature and Culture*, Rosen Education Service, 2009, p.111 (ISBN-13:978-1615300198)
4. This movement was initiated in Iran in the eighteenth century to go back to the era of classical poets between the ninth and the fifteenth centuries.
5. *History and Historiography of Post-Mongol Central Asia and Middle East*, Studies in honour of John E. Woods by Harrowitz Verlag, p.348. Also refer to *Encyclopedia Iranica* by William L. Hamaway. Kuiper, *op.cit.*
6. *Reorientations: Arabic And Persian Poetry* ed. by Suzzanne P. Stetkevych, Indian University Press, 1993, p.210
7. Jan Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature*, D. Reidel, 1968, p.330.
8. (Ammar Ali Qureshi, "Purple Patch: Qa'ani's elegy and Imam Husain (AS)", *Daily Times*, December 28, 2009.)
9. *Divan-i Hakim Qa'ani*, ed. Muhammad J. Mahjub, Tehran: Majlis 1957, p.181
10. Ibid., p.47
11. Jan Rypka, *op.cit.*
12. *Iran's Constitutional Revolution* – "Intellectual Background: The Constitutional Language and Imagery" by Mohamad Tavakoli Toranto.
13. Browne, E.G., *A Literary History of Persia*, Vol.4 pp.171-81, 326-35. Also refer to Irfan Habib Adle's *Age of Achievement : A.D. 750 to the End of Fifteenth Century*, UNESCO, 2003, p.715.

14. Chopra, R.M., *Indo-Iranian Cultural Relations Through The Ages*, Iran Society, 2005, pp.109-10.
15. Ibid.
16. In 1911 The Persia Society was founded in London which wound up in 1929. The successor of the Persia Society was the Iran Society in London which came into being in 1935 with the aims and objects of providing a platform for those interested in Iran's history and culture by means of lectures and occasional publications, to spread knowledge and understanding of Iranian culture in the U.K. and to further the cause of Anglo-Iranian understanding and friendship. The Society is continuing to pursue its aims and objects.

EPILOGUE

After the Arab conquest of Iran in the middle of the seventh century, Arabic became the dominant language in Iran, in official circles and religion, for almost two centuries; however, Pahlavi, or Middle Persian, continued to be spoken in private life. With the weakening of the Abbasids in Baghdad in the ninth century, a modified and improved form of Pahlavi emerged with a large infusion of Arabic words in Arabic script. This was the Neo-Persian, now known as Persian, which has been used in Iran through the centuries till today.

Subsequent to the emergence of Neo-Persian, Arabic continued to be employed in Iran as a language of the learned though on a decreasing scale. It was employed by many litterateurs in their writings, such as Bu Ali Sina (Avicenna) (980-1037), Al-Beiruni (973-1048), Rhazes (Al-Razi, c 865-925), Al-Ghazali (1058-1111), and many others. In fact, many of the most famous names in Arabic literature of that time are those of men of Iranian birth. Gradually, the use of Arabic declined in Iran and Persian developed rapidly to become the vehicle of a great literature and, before long, spread its influence in Anatoliya and India.

In India particularly, Persian language and poetry became the vogue with the establishment of Delhi Sultanate (1206-1525) and, later on, at the court of the Mughals (1526-1835), it became the official language, spreading thence to the rest of the Indian subcontinent and producing poets and writers of remarkable genius. In due course of time, Persian, fusing with Hindwi or Hindi, gave rise to Urdu language.

In Anatoliya, Persian also influenced the language and literature of Turkey so much so that Turkish verse was based

on Persian models as regards forms, style and subject matter with extensive borrowed vocabulary from Persian.

A significant feature of the ninth century, which, incidentally, also marks the beginning of the golden period of classical Persian poetry in Iran, is that it is perfectly intelligible to the modern reader. Another noteworthy characteristic of the ninth century Persian literature is that poetry received exceptional prominence right from the emergence of Neo-Persian. In the early stages, classical Persian poetry was produced almost entirely under royal patronage and it is for this reason that we find frequency of *qasidas*, or panegyric odes. Soon *tasawwuf* (Sufism) influenced Iranian psyche which inspired the remarkable high proportion of mystical poetry, with free use of Sufic imagery, other references and allusions. Classical Persian poetry thence onwards came to depend on beauty of language for effects. According to Sir E. Denison Ross, the renowned Orientalist, the greatest charm of classical Persian poetry lies "in its language and its music." (1)

In the classical period of Persian poetry, especially from the tenth to the fifteenth centuries, Iran produced poets of remarkable genius and exceptional talent. In the tenth century, we have poets Rudaki (d.954 A.D.), generally known as the "Chaucer of Persia", (2) and Ferdowsi (940-1020), usually referred to as the "Persian Homer". (3) In the eleventh century, we have Omar Khayyam (1048-1131), mathematician and philosopher-poet. In the twelfth century, we have Nizami Ganjavi (1141-1209), master of Persian romantic *mesnavi*. The twelfth century is also marked by the development of mystic, or Sufistic, poetry and we have poets Hakim Sanai (d. c 1131) and Fariduddin Attar (1145-1220). The thirteenth century is specially known for the development of mystic as well as

didactic poetry and we have Jalaluddin Rumi (1207-1273), the doyen of Sufi poets, and Sa'di Shirazi (c 1200-1291), the poet of quintessential wisdom. In the fourteenth century we have prince of poets, Hafiz Shirazi (c 1317 – c 1390), the greatest lyric poet of Persian. In the fifteenth century, we have Jami (1414-1492), a versatile scholar, mystic and poet.

Apart from the aforementioned poets, there were many other outstanding poets of Persian in the classical period such as Daqiqi (c 940- c 980) an epic poet, the panegyrists Khaqani (1121-1190) and Anwari (d. c 1200), and Persian polymath and prolific writer Nasiruddin Tusi (1201-1274). After Jami, who died shortly before the rise of the Safawids in 1501, Persian poetry is generally considered to have fallen in decline. There were indeed no poets of first rank in Iran in the sixteenth century but there was no lack of poets of talent. Of the poets following Jami were his nephew Hatif, a noted poet of romantic and historical epics, and there were others, such as Asafi, Fighani, Ahli and Sufi poet Hilali; and in the late sixteenth century came the poets Hayrati, Kasimi, Fasihi and Shafai.

From the end of fifteenth to the seventeenth century, there was a hiatus and the next name of Persian poet of some significance after Jami that we come across is that of Saib Tabrizi (1601-1677), who spent over eight years in the Indian sub-continent during the formative period of his life which developed in him an elegant wit, a gift for the aphorism and the proverb, and a keen appreciation of philosophical and intellectual exercise. He was a vivid and an original poet who, having imbibed the best of *Sabq-i-Hindi* in India, infused fresh life into the old forms and founded a new school. After returning from India, he was made poet-laureate of the Safawid ruler Shah Abbas II (1642-1666).

In the nineteenth century in Iran, Saba, poet laureate to Fath Ali Shah Qajar, composed a *Diwan* and an epic called the *ShahanShah-nameh*. Qa'ani Shirazi (d. 1854) was the best poet of the nineteenth century and, perhaps, the most outstanding since Jami, and one of Iran's most brilliant and melodious poets. Qa'ani is universally hailed as the last great poet of classical Persian poetry.

ANALYSIS OF CLASSICAL PERSIAN POETRY IN IRAN

In the middle of the thirteenth century, the entire Persian speaking world went through the catastrophic upheavals following the Mongol invasion. Wherever the Mongols went, misery and desolation followed. People were displaced and large scale migration took place to Anatoliya and the Indian subcontinent. The westward migrations of Jalaluddin Rumi to Anatoliya and many Sufis, divines and literati to the Indian subcontinent are a few examples.

Even after the close of the thirteenth-century and undergoing traumatic experiences in the wake of repeated invasions, such was the intellectual vitality of the people of Iran that lyric poetry and rhetoric verse well developed during and after these stormy times in the political and military world that they had many men of culture and poetic talent. If compared to the other literatures of the world, it is seldom that they arise from an age of prostration and regain their strength, vitality and brilliance. History has a few exceptions and Iran has repeatedly recovered herself from the ravages of foreign conquest.

So many times Iran was invaded when the design of the conquerors was extermination of the science of letters, all the time she rallied from the shock and rebuilt her institutions of learning, founding a new national literature upon the ruins of the old. The glaring example of this we can observe in the poetry of Hafiz Shirazi, the prince of poets, in the fourteenth century, when lyric poetry in Persian reached its apogee.

The last greatly acknowledged poet of classical Persian in Iran was Jami (1414-1492), a great mystic and scholar who also marks the end of "The Golden Age" of classical Persian poetry. The Safawid period in Iran (1501-1720) was not very fertile in great poets and poetry languished. Consequently many well-known Persian poets and Sufis emigrated to India and embellished the Mughal court, where generous patronage was provided, and produced their excellent lyrics and *mesnavis* and profusely enriched Indo-Persian literature.

In the nineteenth century we come across the name of Qa'ani Shirazi (1808-1854), who not only displayed the traditional glamorous artistry of the classical Persian poets, but also demonstrated astonishing command over various poetic forms, a mastery of words, and remarkable melody and sweetness in his poetry.

Classical Persian poetry developed into a vehicle for the most refined thoughts and the deepest sentiments. Compassionate and passionate at the same time, it speaks the language of Iranian heart, mind and soul, fully reflecting the Iranian world view and life experience

Classical Persian poets are proven masters of vignettes, aphorisms, pithy remarks, proverbial sayings, felicitous formulations, pregnant allusions, illustrious anecdotes, and imaginative short descriptions. The poets often succeeded in

expressing profound thoughts or impassioned sentiments within the confines of a single couplet, distich, or *bayt*.

Another significant feature of the classical Persian poetry of Iran is in its taste for the good use of rhetorical devices and ornament and a marked tendency towards decoration of the verse. All these embellishments and ornamentation have added to imparting elegance and sophistication to Persian poetry which rouse the reader's instant admiration. Stylistic mastery and rhetorical craftsmanship, in due course of time, became the hallmark of good composition. In the hands of master poets who used these techniques with discretion and masterful handling, these attributes became effective and excellent tools for aesthetic expressions; but in the hands of less-endowed poets, however, meanings and effects were often obscured by expressive ornamentation which gave rise to artificial style and pedantic diction.

If we analyze the Persian poetry of classical period in Iran, we find that the epics are at the apex of the "Exalted Style," or *Sabq-i-Fakhr*, which have provided pride and inspiration to Iranians and an identity through the ages. In the composition of eulogistic verse, or court poetry, the classical poets exhibited their mastery but, since the aims were not so laudable and confined only to flattery, it lacked truth, realism and sincerity.

The true greatness and charm of classical Persian poetry is to be seen in lyrics, romantic narratives, Sufistic and didactic poetry, which provide inspiration, grace, beauty and sweetness unparalleled in any other literature. In all these genres the main themes are: separation from the beloved, divine love (*Ishq-i-Haqiqi*) or worldly love (*Ishq-i-Majazi*), the cruelty of fate, the evanescence of life, destruction caused by war, ecstatic transports of wine, and practical quintessential wisdom. In the

presentation of these ideas the unchallengeable excellence of this poetry has got to be admitted.(4)

The effect of classical Persian poetry is cooling and very refreshing like the gale which blows on mountain tops. "Its greatest merit lies in the beauty of its words, the softness of its cadences, the charm of its expression. The language itself is musical and the recitation of Persian poetry creates melodious vibrations which long resound in mind. The prolonged accents of a Persian line are endowed with innate beauty and grace, and its cadences rise and fall with a natural rhythm. The infinite charm of Persian poetry remains un-withered by age, unstaled by custom unhackneyed by quotation." (5)

IN INDIA

Persian was introduced into India in the early eleventh century by Mahmud of Ghazna, who led umpteen raids into the subcontinent and occupied the Punjab and Upper Sindh in 1020. (6) His descendents continued to rule in northwestern India until 1186 with Lahore as capital. From the early part of the twelfth century, the rule of Ghaznavids was confined to their Indian dominions only when Lahore, which had become a great literary centre, came to be referred to as "Little Ghazna." Persian became the main language of administration, literature and culture. It was in the Ghaznavid period that two Persian poets of outstanding merit were born and brought up in Lahore – Abul Farj Runi (d. 1107?) a panegyrist who influenced Anwari (d.1200) of Iran, and Masud Sa'd Salman (1046-1121), a great innovator who is famous for the genre "*habsiyat*", or prison poems.

The establishment of Delhi Sultanate in 1206 heralded the flowering of Indo-Persian literature in the mould of classical Persian literature of Iran. The munificence of its rulers, who were highly Persianized Turks, attracted many poets and scholars from Iran and Transoxiana, displaced in the wake of Mongol invasions. Persian gradually achieved the status of the most prestigious language of an increasingly large region. It is remarkable to note that Persian literary trends were thus assimilated and refashioned in the complex and intricately multi layered cultural milieu of India. In a short time, Persian developed as a literary medium in different regions of India and produced Persian poets and writers of uncanny genius who made singular contribution to the enormous productions of Persian literature in India.

It was in the art of *ghazal* (lyric) that Indo-Persian poets produced their most subtle innovations. Among the many poets, who wrote their poetry, were Amir Khusrow (1253-1325) and Hasan Sijzi Dehlavi (1263-1337). Amir Khusrow composed poetry in all the genres of classical Persian and is known for creating a didactic style. He is hailed as the greatest poet of medieval India. Hasan Sijzi Dehlavi is known for his sweet monothematic lyrics and came to be referred to as "Sa'di of India." Among other noteworthy poets were Tajuddin Raza (died after 1265) and Badr Chachi (d.1346).

By early fourteenth century Persian had taken deep roots in India and played an important role in the unification of the vast subcontinent. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami (1925-1997), in his paper on "Persian Influence On Literary and Sufi Traditions in South Asia", (7) says –

"In the fields of learning and literature, Iranian influence shaped the contours and conspectus of historiography, poetry,

tasawwuf (mysticism), *insha* (epistolary principles) and *tibb* (medicine). Amir Khusrow has referred to the linguistic homogeneity brought about by Persian language in a country of proliferate linguistic traditions. He (Amir Khusrow) remarks

—
“The Persian language as spoken in India is the same from Sindh to Bengal. This Persian is our Dari. Indian languages differ from group to group and change (their dialects) after every hundred miles. But Persian is the same over an area of four thousand farsangs.”

After Amir Taimur's invasion in 1398 and destruction of Delhi, which marked, especially for northern India, a deep hiatus in literary and cultural activity, some recovery in literary and cultural activity was made under Pashtu Lodi dynasty (1451-1526). The age of the first six Mughal rulers from (1526-1707), represented the hey-day of Indo-Persian literature. It was replenished by fresh waves of talented emigrants from Safawid Iran and by increasing Hindu participation in Persian writing.

The poets who emigrated from Iran, among others, were: Ghazali Mashhadi (d.1572), Urfi (1555-1592), Naziri Nishapuri (d.1618), Talib Amuli (d.1626), and Abu Talib Kalim (d.1650). Apart from these, there were India born Persian poets, the main among them were Faizi (1547-1595), a versatile poet, Ghani Kashmiri (b.1630), a master of gnomic poetry, Nasir Ali Sirhindi (1638-1697) known for his orthodoxy, and Bedil Dehlavi (1644-1721), an exquisite exponent of *Sabq-i-Hindi*, or “Indian Style” of poetry, who wrote extensively poetry, philosophy and wisdom stories. Among the Hindu poets were Chandra Bhan Brahmin (d.1662) and Mirza Manohar “Takasani” whom Saib Tabrizi

admired and gave him the honour of having some of his verses included in his own *bayaz*. (8)

The originality and importance of contribution by Indian poets and writers to classical Persian literature can be seen in all the genres of poetry when the most sublime and accomplished Persian poetry was produced.

India witnessed most productive efflorescence of Persian literary culture in all the branches of knowledge. The corpus of Persian literature produced in India, both in poetry and prose, was so vast until the nineteenth century that it dwarfed all the Persian literature produced in Iran and other Persian-speaking countries until that time.

On a careful analysis we find that the beginnings of Indian Persian closely followed chronologically the establishment of the canon of Neo-Persian in Iran and there was broad consensus on an inclusive concept of “Ajam” as embracing the world from Afghanistan to Anatoliya. It was, however, under the Mughals that India emerged as a viable alternative to Iran as a centre of Persian literature which fortified the *Sabq-i-Hindi* or “Indian Style” of poetry. The production in this period was so enormous and of such quality that Iran had to pay attention to it, sometimes even grudgingly.

INFLUENCE OF PERSIAN CLASSICAL POETRY ON EUROPE AND AMERICA

Scholars are in consensus that the epic, lyric, didactic, mystic, statiristic, or pessimist poets of Iran such as Ferdowsi, Hafiz, Sa'di, Attar, Rumi, and Omar Khayyam, each in his own different way has appealed to some ground common to all mankind. From among these the best known in Europe are: Ferdowsi, Hafiz, Sa'di, Rumi and Omar Khayyam. These great

poets have inspired the European nations since the eighteenth century and one finds their praise recurring time and again in various literatures of Europe.

Broadly speaking, out of the different European nations, we observe that poetry of one poet appealed more than the others, as for example, Hafiz was greatly appreciated in Germany, Sa'di in France and Omar Khayyam in England. This does not mean that others were completely ignored but it only shows the national preference in each case.

IN GERMANY:

The credit must go to the Germans who were the first to begin the study of Iranian literature, in general, and Persian poetry, in particular. It all began with the translations of Sa'di's *Gulistan* and *Bostan* made by the traveller – scholar Adam Olearius (1671 A.D.). These had a salutary influence on German literature of the seventeenth century which continued even in the eighteenth century and thereafter. Thanks to a number of remarkable German poet-scholars such as Herder, Hartmann, Schlegel and Hammer and later Ruckert that the poets and writers of the West were acquainted with the hidden treasures in the Eastern Literature, in general, and Persian literature in particular. The most important single work that influenced German as well as other literatures of Europe was Goethe's "*West-Ostlicher Diwan*" which left a lasting impression everywhere in Europe. Goethe tried to introduce Iranian ideas into German literature.

Another German philosopher, poet and composer, Friedrich Nietzsche is also full of praise for Hafiz and has said:

"O hafiz thou has built a tavern of philosophy which is mightier than any other palace in the world, and in it,

thou has prepared wine full of sweet words
that surpasses the power of a world to drink." (9)

Persian poets, for a time, held the field in German literature but in the nineteenth century as a result of new rage of nationalism, which swept over Europe, these magnificent efforts of poet-scholars were drowned.

IN ENGLAND

In England, however, the case was different. Once large parts of India came under the British control and as the court language and the language of the ruling elite in India was Persian, the English agents who worked for the East India Company had to learn *Farsi*, or Persian, in order to have a direct access to the Indian ruling elite. In the process, the English agents became acquainted, indirectly, with the literatures of Iran as they were acquiring knowledge of Persian in India. The English agents took pains first to learn, and then to codify, and ultimately to teach Persian. They established institutions where knowledge of Persian, among other languages of the Orient, could be imparted in India as well as in England.(10)

The Calcutta Madrasa was established by Warren Hastings in 1780, the Asiatic Society was founded by Sir William Jones in 1784, and Fort William College by Lord Wellesly in 1800, all in India; Haileybury College was established in 1807, the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland was launched in 1823, and another important institution engaged in Persian studies is the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, founded in 1916, all in England.

Sir William Jones wrote a *Grammer* of the Persian language in 1771 and was the first to translate a *ghazal* of Hafiz into English, besides writing other literary works. His writings on Persian inspired a significant body of post-colonial critique, while their impact on English poets such as Southby, Shelley, Byron and Coleridge has attracted the attention of Romantic literature in England and Europe. Omar Khayyam made a great impact in English-speaking countries by the translation of his *rubai's* by Edward Fitz Gerald (1809-1883) in 1859. The classical poets Hafiz, Sa'di, Khayyam, Rumi, Nizami and Ferdowsi – are now widely known in English and can be read in various translations.

Between Sir William Jones (1746-1794) and Sir E. Denison Ross (1871-1940) there was a legion of scholars, poets and researchers who, by their research and translation, did a marvellous job and were responsible for unearthing Persian literary treasures and for making them known to the rest of the world and generated considerable interest in other nationalities who took up the cause of the Orient with renewed interest, especially in Sweden and Italy.

IN FRANCE

As it is said in the case of England, nineteenth century France was also interested in Oriental languages to further its own colonial designs. They were interested in Persian language and literature so long as they had designs on India. Once their designs on India were thwarted, they looked to North Africa and Syria and cultivated their interest in Arabic for furthering their colonial designs. The Persian works which were known to them continued to play their part in the vast French literature in the nineteenth century. If one goes through the French literature of the nineteenth century and the first half of the

twentieth century, one can see the works of Attar, Nizami, Sa'di, Hafiz and Jami appear in French. Silvestre de Sacy (1758-1838) translated in 1805 Attar's *Pand-Nameh* into French. Several translations of Sa'di's *Gulistan* appeared in France. From 1838 to 1877 Jules Mohl (1800-1876) translated Ferdowsi's *Shah-nameh* into French.

In the study of the religions of ancient Iran, French scholar Anquetil Duperron was the first European who spent sixteen years of his life to study *Zend Avesta* in India which he finally translated and published in 1771. Many other French scholars followed him such as Darmesteter in 1880. In 1734 a book about "The History of Manichaeism" was published by Jean de Bosobere.

Paul Fort (1872-1960) one of the celebrated French poets, composed an ode in honour of Ferdowsi when he went to Iran to participate in the millinery celebrations of Ferdowsi in 1934.

IN SWEDEN

In Sweden, numerous works of classical Persian poetry were translated into Swedish by Baron Eric Ayol Hermelin, an author and prolific translator (1860-1944). (11) He translated works by, among others, Fariduddin Attar, Rumi, Ferdowsi, Omar Khayyam, Sa'di and Sanai. He himself was greatly influenced by the Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg and was attracted to the Sufic poetry of Iran. His translations have had a great impact on many modern Swedish writers and poets, among them Karl Wennberg, Willy Kirlund and Gunnar Ekelof. Excerpts from Ferdowsi's *Shah-nameh* have also been rendered into Swedish prose by Namdar Nassir and Anja Malmberg.

IN ITALY

In Italy also many poetic works of Persian have been translated into Italian. (12) Alessandro Bausani translated works of Nizami, Rumi, Iqbal and Omar Khayyam. Carlo Saccone translated works of Attar, Sanai, Hafiz, Nizami and Ansari of Herat. Angelo Piemontese translated works of Amir Khusrow; Pio Filippini – Ronconi of Sa'di Shirazi, Giovanni Maria D'Erme of Hafiz. A complete translation of Ferdowsi's *Shah-nameh* was made by Italo Pizzi in the nineteenth century.

In Italy the approach adopted towards Persian texts was purely academic. The first poem to be translated into Italian was Amir Khusrow's *Hasht-Behesht* by Cristoforo Armeno and published in Venice in 1557. It is not a literal translation but an adaptation in comparison with other Persian texts of Nizami's *Haft Paykar* and Hatifi's *Haft-Manzar*.

IN AMERICA

In America, the east was taken up by Irving who, greatly familiar with Persian tales, created Sleeper story in Rip Van Winckle. Ralph Waldo Emerson, in his essays "Persian Poetry" (1876, Letters and Social Aims), "From the Persian of Hafiz", and "Ghazelle", expressed admiration for classical Persian poetry, and through these writings became instrumental in creating a new genre of audiences for the unique qualities of Persian verse. He admired Sa'di to such an extent that he frequently used his name as a "nom de plume" and compared his writings to the Bible in terms of its wisdom and the beauty of its narrative. (13) Omar Khayyam of course is a much read and admired in the United States as in England. Now Rumi's poetry has become very fashionable and popular in America

especially after translations by Coleman Barks that in 2007 when Rumi's eight-hundredth birth anniversary was celebrated, he was declared to be the most popular poet in America.

CONCLUSION

Classical Persian poetry has played a vital role for materializing ideas and feelings in concrete form. Poetry offered Iranians and other Persian-speaking nations an answer to their existential problem, particularly in the troublous times in the middle ages. The recitation of classical Persian poetry developed an admirable serenity, patience, peace of mind and detachment from material things and stood them in good stead during several upheavals which had taken place in their long and variegated history and, in the process, produced one of the greatest and most magnificent literatures in the world.

In the final analysis of classical Persian poetry, we come to the conclusion that one of the most notable features of it is conservatism, not only in terms of literary traditions, but also linguistically. The language of poetry, even of a thousand years ago, is so close to today's living language that it can be easily read and understood by any educated Persian-speaking person.

The chief merit of classical Persian poetry lies in the fact that it is full of love, deep feelings, highly didactic, profoundly spiritual which captivates the hearts of Persian-speaking people, rustic as well as highly intellectual, and inspires them even today to recite it with great relish.

No doubt, Iran's modern literature, including poetry, is profuse in quantity, largely consisting of romance, sociological content, individual and social ethics, reforms and patriotism, but the best works of Iran's poetry, in my opinion, belong to

the centuries past – in the poetry of great poets of classical Persian.

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

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3. Homer was a Greek poet of c 8th century B.C. who wrote extensively on heroic tradition of Greece.
4. Chopra, R.M., *Indo-Iranian Cultural Relations Through The Ages*, Iran Society, Kolkata, 2005, p.48.
5. Davar, F.C., *Iran and Its Culture*, New Book Co., Bombay, 1953, p.294.
6. Most of the details about Persian in india are culled from *The Rise, Growth And Decline of Indo-Persian Literature* by R.M. Chopra, Iran Culture House, New Delhi and Iran Society, Kolkata, 2nd Edition, 2013.
7. This article is published in *Iran Nameh*, quarterly journal of Foundation for Iranian Studies, 4343 Montgomery Avenue, Bethesda, Maryland.
8. *Tazkira-i-Gul-i-Ra'ana* by Lachmi Narayan "Shafiq", Hyderabad, p.40.
9. This is collected from Nietzsche's *Collected Works*, entitled *An Hafis: Frage eines Wassertrinkers* (To Hafiz: Questions of a Water Drinker).

10. All this information can be gleaned from the author's book: *The Rise, Growth And Decline of Indo-Persian Literature*.
11. An article on "Hermelin, Axel Eric (1860-1944), Swedish author and prolific translator of Persian Works of Literature" by Bo Utas was published in 2003 in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, updated in 2012. It is stated in the article that Eric came to India with the British army in 1887 and spent time on language studies. He learnt Urdu and started to learn Persian. His first publication was in 1918 of Sa'di's *Bostan*. It was the first in a long series of translations of classical Persian literature in Swedish.
12. Mario Casari, in an article on "Translations of Persian Works into Italian", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 2007, updated in 2012. It contains detailed information on the subject.
13. Milani, A., *Lost Wisdom*, 2004, Washington, p.39.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX - I A Review of Pre-Islamic Splendour of IRAN

A REVIEW OF PRE-ISLAMIC SPLENDOUR OF IRAN

*Based on N.N. Law Memorial Lecture delivered by the
author in Iran Society*

*on 27th September, 2003 and published in Indo-Iranica,
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History is a record of the achievements of man. The history of Iran, like the history of any other country, should begin with an account of times men first settled in this area. But history proper only deals with facts, and facts can only be known from records of some kind. We cannot know the history of any people who have left no records of their existence. The story of Iran before the time of Cyrus of the Achaeminian dynasty was a confused patch-work of myth and legend. I shall first deal with some of these myths and legends.

According to the ancient folk-lore and mythology, Iran witnessed two famous royal dynasties, namely, Peshdadian and Kayanian. It is believed that Jamshed was the fourth monarch of Peshdadian dynasty and is generally regarded as the father of ancient Iranian civilization. His life is steeped in myths and legends which have come down to us. He is the earliest king who wielded power for many centuries and brought the new ideas of kingship and affection. He is known to have held sway even in the northern part of India. In Hindu mythology and Vedic reference, he is accepted as *Yama Vivasvat* – who could not conquer the Lord of Death and realize the Immortality of the Soul.

Jamshed is said to have divided his subjects into four classes, almost on the pattern of the Hindu caste-system, namely, the priests, the warriors, the agriculturists and the labourers.

The classification was based on inherent quality of individuals and, unlike the Hindus, not on birth; there was no rigidity as such in pursuit of the same. The use of wine was discovered during his reign and it was found that wine had both exhilarating as well as curative properties which accounts for its prevalence in Iranian social life from ancient times. Legend has it that Jamshed possessed a miraculous cup, *Jam-i-Jamshed* (Cup of Jamshed) which, after ablutions and prayers, could reveal unto him what he was anxious to know. It was during his time that numerous discoveries were made which are helpful to mankind, in general, such as, spinning and weaving, baking of bricks, building of houses, sailing in ships, etc. It was during his reign that agriculture was developed; iron weapons were invented; musical instruments were devised and perfume was extracted from flowers. Again, it was during his time that calendar was introduced and New Year day was fixed to coincide with equinox, that is, on 21st March when day and night are of equal duration. This day is still celebrated as "*Jamshedi Navroz*". In short, Jamshed is supposed to have completely transformed nomadic race of the early Aryans in Iran into a nation of settled and regular habits. "It was Jamshed who lit the torch of civilization and inspired his fellow-countrymen to tread the path of virtue and morality". (1)

It is also said that Jamshed's last years were not very happy. Power and prestige turned his head and he is supposed to have claimed divinity for himself. Consequently, he became an arrogant tyrant. As a result, his subjects, who had supported him devotedly in his early days, became discontented with his reign. Taking advantage of the troubled times, King Zohak, (also known as Zahak) probably of Arab or Babylonian origin, invaded Iran and overthrew Jamshed. Jamshed was disgraced, captured and cruelly put to death by Zohak. In spite of these

adverse happenings towards the end of his life, it must be admitted that the myths of ancient Iran never boast of a king more illustrious than Jamshed who captured the imagination of subsequent generations of Iranians. He epitomizes all that is good in kingship, and is adored as the holy spirit and the ultimate in benign rulership.

The Peshdadian dynasty was followed by the Kayanian dynasty which began with Kai-Kobad. Zoroaster (Zarathustra) is supposed to have preached his gospel during the reign of Kai-Vishtasp. So impressed was the king with the new message that he publicly embraced the new creed. The king's conversion was followed by the courtiers and the general public.

When Zoroaster appeared as a prophet, he denounced the basic structure of the then existing religion and affirmed the existence of Ahura Mazda as the Creator and Lord of the Universe, the Almighty Spirit and the Supreme Being immune from change.

According to Zoroaster the entire universe is governed by God, hence He is called AHURA; whatever is there in creation is created or dispensed by Him, hence He is called MAZDA, Wisdom Consummate. Ahura Mazda is above everything and forms the trinity of creating, directing and controlling the entire creation. Thus the monotheism of Zoroaster was established in Iran which guided the destiny of Aryans of Iran for over fifteen hundred years till the advent of Islam in Iran.

Historians place Zoroaster, in the eighth century B.C. He was born in Azerbaijan in a family of the Magi priests. It is believed that the Magi followed certain peculiar practices, such as, exposure of the dead-body to the carnivorous birds, and killing of most animals except man and dog. Zoroaster, whose

name was Spitama, was known as Zarashushtra – He of the Golden Light – after he proclaimed his religion.

Zoroaster was a rationalist, a monotheist, a realist and a metaphysician. He moulded the haphazard religious thought then existing into an organized order and affirmed the existence of Mazda as the Creator and Lord of the Universe. He removed vagueness in his delineations and exhorted people to have high morals and not to satisfy deified powers of nature through sacrifices of animals, and he actually condemned the killing of animals. He illuminated people about the Truth and God. He deprecated excessiveness and extremes of any kind. Dedication to God first and foremost and then service of humanity with divine aid are the significant features of his teachings.

The fundamental principle of Zoroastrianism is embodied in the triad of: *Humata* – good thought; *Hukhta* – good word, and *Hyarahta* – good deed. Zoroaster preached that, to emancipate the soul, good thoughts, good words and good deeds are necessary to develop virtuous practice which enables one to reach perfection. Zoroaster recognized in *Atar* (fire), or Immortal Light, the spiritual resurrection of the soul and established it as an outward symbol of worship. In the *Atash Behrams*, the fire temples, the Zoroastrians pay deep homage to *Atar*, the perpetual flame, which, to them, indicates the presence of Ahura Mazda. Zoroaster thus propounded a religion which is synonymous with practical morality, path of righteousness, or religion of good life. From the time of Kai-Vishtasp, it can be said, Zoroastrianism became the state religion of Iran.

The last of the Kayanian King, Hukhshtara, was defeated by Ninus, the Assyrian King, and Iran came under the domination of a foreign power. Iran remained under the

Assyrians for some generations. In the absence of any historical records, it is presumed that soon after that Iran was cut up into small principalities ruled by various tribal units. This position appears to have continued in the first half of the first millennium B.C. One of the tribes which came to prominence was Medes who steadily advanced in power and independently ruled in Media from 700 B.C. The Medes were of Aryan stock and followers of Zoroastrianism. Media consisted of Azarbaijan and the area known as Iraq-i-Ajam. The Median priests were known as the Magi, a reference to which is also made in the Bible.

The Magian priesthood of ancient Iran is believed to have played an important role in the development of sun-worship in India during the Puranic period. There is a Puranic legend of Samba who was attacked with leprosy. Samba went to Sakadwip, later on came to be known as Seistan, now in Afghanistan, where he was particularly cured of his malady and, on the advice of the Sun-god, brought from there eighteen families of Magian priests. Subsequently, he raised a temple dedicated to the Sun at Mulsthanapur, modern Multan in West Punjab, now in Pakistan, on the banks of Chandrabhaga, or modern Chenab, and got himself cured of the disease by worshipping the Sun. There is a monument of historical interest by the name of Suraj Kund, a large tank in the shape of the Sun a few kilometers away from the city, which appears to be a relic of antiquity and, perhaps, connected with the above mentioned Puranic legend.

The Magi priests who came from Iran to Multan were known as “Maga” or “Sakadwipa” Brahmins and were absorbed in Hindu social system under that name. “They introduced two new features in the making of the Sun-image in India, namely, encircling the waist of the figure with the sacred thread (*abhyanga*), which is an adaptation of an Iranian custom and

covering the legs of the image almost upto the knee with top boots. Sakadwipa, one of the seven legendary concentric islands described in the Puranas, has been identified with Seistan in eastern Iran. One of the contributions of this priestly community to Indian sun worship is the great emphasis it has laid on the worship of the sun as a cure-deity." (2)

Another tribe of Aryan stock, Achaeminians, ruled in Persis, also known as Pars or Fars, which, subsequently, gave its name to the whole country. Achaeminians, the rulers, of Pars, paid tribute to the Median sovereigns. Kurush (Cyrus), a hero of the Achaeminian dynasty, defeated his own maternal grand-father, Astyages, the last Median King, in the battle of Pasargard and extinguished for ever the Median power.

The ancient history of Iran, in fact, begins from Kurush of the Achaeminian dynasty, immortalized by the Greek historians under the name of Cyrus. He reigned from 558 B.C. to 529 B.C. and ranks among the great conquerors of the world. He conquered Media in 549 B.C., Croesus of Lydia in 546, and Babylon in 538 B.C. He created an empire covering the greater part of the then known ancient world. It was under Cyrus that the cities of the Ionian Confederacy in Asia Minor were conquered which brought Iranians and Greeks into direct contact. The Greeks regarded Cyrus himself with awe and admiration not unmixed with fear. Since the kingdom established by Cyrus originated in the province of Pars, also known as Fars, and spread over whole of Iran, the country came to be alternatively known as Persia deriving the name from its foremost province.

It was Cyrus who cast his eyes on India, and, according to Prof. A.V.W. Jackson, he campaigned in the territories of Afghanistan and Baluchistan. (3) After Cyrus, his son Cambyses

(Kambujia) ruled from 530 B.C. to 521 B.C. It was during his reign that Egypt was conquered in 525 B.C. After Cambyses Darius, also known as Daravyush, came to the throne in 521 B.C. at the age of twenty-nine and ruled until 486 B.C. He was followed by Xerxes who ruled from 486 B.C. to 465 B.C. Under these rulers, political power of Iran was not only firmly established, but also so effectively was this Persian Empire constructed that for two centuries it remained intact in the hands of the dynasty which founded it.

It was Darius who conquered Sind and the Punjab in 512 B.C., the first historical instance of the conquest of Indian provinces by a foreign power. (4) Thus the direct political contact became a solid ground of the transmission of Iranian cultural influence into India. It is said in whichever direction Darius turned, he conquered, but his armies suffered a defeat in 490 B.C. at the hands of the Greeks at the famous battle of Marathon. In this battle, Herodotus, the historian, testifies that the Persians were in no way inferior to the Greeks in valour, but their failure was due to inferior weapons, no armour and lack of training. (5) Darius was ambitious; he possessed resolute character and was endowed with an iron will.

From his rock-records at Behistun – the rock is about 1700 feet in height and the inscriptions are 500 feet from ground level – we know that Darius reigned over thirty kingdoms, big or small. The Achaeminian Empire was the first attempt to bring many different races and nationalities under a single government, which assured to the whole the rights and privileges as well as the burdens and responsibilities of members of the State. According to Dr. Will Durant, the Achaeminian Empire was the most successful experiment in imperial government in the annals of ancient history that the Mediterranean world knew before the coming of Rome – which was destined to inherit

much of the earlier Empire's political structure and administrative forms. (6) It is significant to note that each region retained its own language, laws, customs, morals, religion, and coinage and sometimes its native dynasty of kings. (7)

At the head of the State was the king, and the Persian monarchy was hereditary. The importance of the Empire can be judged from the fact that the Achaeminian Empire was four times the size of the Assyrian and eight times the size of the Babylonian empires. The Achaeminian Empire extended upto almost 5000 kilometers from West to East, that is, from Egypt to Mt. Caucasus, and from 700 to 2500 kilometers from North to South or the Danube to the Indus.

The Early years of Darius' reign were spent in subjugating the revolts raised against his authority. He gradually extended his empire, displaying great foresight in all his administration. It is rare to find such an instance of efficient government on such an extensive scale in ancient times. The soldiers were drawn in times of war from all nations of the empire, but the flower of the army consisted of Persians and Medes. Every province was ruled by a Satrap jointly with a military officer of the highest rank. The object was that each might hold the other in check and none might monopolise the sole administration and declare himself independent. Sometimes, to win the regard of the vanquished, the Satrap (head of civil administration) was appointed from among them, but as far as possible the general of the army was nominated from the members of the royal family. Darius maintained an espionage system by appointing officers in every subject state known as the "King's Eyes or the King's Ears", whose business it was to report any evidence of unrest or disobedience. Darius also dispatched a trusted secretary to every province to note any instance of injustice or

tyranny and bring it to the royal notice. The policy of checks and balances was thus firmly established to keep the empire together.

Darius was convinced that the successful administration of such a great empire would not be possible unless he and his functionaries received timely information. He, therefore, arranged relays of horses every thirty kilometers so that the messengers might reach their destination. Inns and caravanserais with stables for the horses were raised for the convenience of messengers and travelers. Road-building, though initiated by Cyrus, was greatly developed by Darius. According to Buchanan Gray and M. Cary, (8) roads resembled the excellent roads of the later Empire of Rome. Darius also built the Royal Road from Susa to Ephesus. In the opinion of historians, such as G.H. Stevenson (9), the ease with which Alexander overthrew the Persian power is partly attributed to the excellent system of roads and communications which were available throughout Iran for his advancing army. Darius divided his Empire into twenty Satrapies two of which were in Indian territory, namely, 'Gadara', or Gandhara, consisting of Peshawar and Taxila, and 'Hindu', or Hindu, which stood for Indus Valley or Punjab and Sind. (10) The Satraps were men of high birth and they remained in for many years, if not for life. At some period the office became, in practice, hereditary though, in theory, terminable at the king's will. The Satraps wielded the widest authority in matters civil and judicial, and even financial affairs were controlled by them. The Satraps, later on, developed a tendency to independence with the connivance of the army generals which facilitated the disruption of the Empire under weak rulers. Darius derived income from every Satrapy except from his own province of Pars which was immune from levies. The Indian Satrapy Hindu appears to have been rich in mineral resources

and, according to the testimony of Herodotus, it paid enormous annual tribute to the Persian King. The secret of the success of the Achaeminian administration lay in its policy of decentralization. (11)

Darius was generous to the conquered kings and their people, and always adopted a kind policy towards them, unless prevented from doing so by unfavourable circumstances. Under Darius the Persian Empire was an achievement in political organization. J.H. Breasted (12) also observes that there can be no doubt that the Persian Empire, the largest the ancient world had thus far seen, enjoyed a government far more just and humane than any that had preceded it in the East. Darius himself was a valiant general in war and a skilful administrator in peace and in the opinion of G.H. Stevenson, (13) possessed many of the qualities which are rightly admired in Augustus Caesar. Darius was fond of constructing palaces and recording his achievements in inscriptions. He was a cultured man and a patron of learning and science. He appreciated the importance of, and introduced into his country, the Egyptian calendar of twelve thirty-day months. He was, likewise, impressed with the value of Egyptian medical knowledge. It is said that he sent back to Egypt a learned Egyptian high-priest, who was a captive in Persia, with instructions to repair to Sais, a city of the western Delta, and to restore there an Egyptian medical school that had fallen into decay. Thus he was responsible for the establishment of the earliest known medical school as a royal foundation.

Darius has recorded his victories in numerous inscriptions on the rock of Behistun. He recorded in these inscriptions the story of his nineteen victories, his twenty Satrapies, and the subjugation of the numerous revolts against his rule. These records reveal his piety, sagacity and humility. His language is dignified; instead of saying that he carved out an Empire by his own endeavours, he modestly attributes whatever success he

achieved to Divine Grace. His inscriptions on the rock of Behistun clearly demonstrate his devotion to God, his adherence to righteousness and his contempt for falsehood. The rock-records are incised in cuneiform script which the Persians had borrowed from the Assyrians, Babylonians and such other races. The cuneiform script was specially invented to be inscribed on stone; in that script every letter was carved straight and there were no curved or circular letters, for it was well-nigh difficult if not impossible to carve out such letters on rocks. The Achaeminians had a language of their own, being a form of the Avestan; Paharvi, Pazend and Persian are derived from this Achaeminian language. Sir Henry Rawlinson was responsible for decipherment of the rock-records of Behistun in the achievement of this tremendous work he put in his great effort, perseverance and sacrifice.

The reign of the Achaeminians set new ideals before mankind – the ideals for the world's good government with the utmost of unity and cohesion combined with the largest possible freedom for the development of race and individual within the larger organism. The tolerance and kindliness displayed by Cyrus and his successors in the Achaeminian period towards the Jews and the Greeks was, indeed, very favourable one and the Iranians appeared not so much as enemies of freedom to them, but as benevolent monotheists whose domination was more acceptable to them. The reign of Darius can be considered as the summit of Iranian splendour in ancient times before Christ.

King Darius Hystaspes the Achaeminian died in 486 B.C. The last Achaeminian king was Darius IV, known to Greek historians as Darius Codomanus, in whose reign Iran was conquered in 330 B.C. by Alexander the Great. The overthrow

of the Achaeminians and the demolition of Iran were complete. Darius himself being murdered by one of his own governors named Bessus.

Petty Iranian monarchies had also arisen in Cappadocia, Armenia and Azarbaijan. The Parthians, who ruled Iran from 256 B.C. to 226 A.D., deserve the credit of having defended Iran and Asia itself for nearly five centuries against the onslaughts of the Romans. The province of Parthia (modern Tabaristan) is to the east of Media and south-east of the Caspian Sea. In 256 B.C., the Parthians under their king Ashk had revolted against the Seleucides and proclaimed their independence. The Seleucides ruled for over fifty years after the death of Alexander. These Seleucides were the descendants of Seleucus, one of the generals of Alexander the Great. According to Megasthenes, Seleucus invaded India and suffered a defeat at the hands of Chandragupta Maurya. He, thereafter, ruled in Iran. It was from this king Ashk that the Parthian dynasty, which ruled from 256 B.C. to 226 A.D., was known as the Ashkanian, or the Arsacide, dynasty. The Parthians were, to a certain extent, Hellenised, and they, by and large, used Greek as their official language. Their religion, no doubt, contained Zoroastrian elements, but they were also devoted to ancestor-worship, idolatry and Babylonian sorcery. The Parthian King Palash (Vologeses) I deserves the honour of having first started the movement of co-ordinating the Zoroastrian scriptures which were at this time in perfect disorder. He also brought together whatever had been orally preserved; he thus revived the Zoroastrian religion which had by this time considerably declined.

The Parthians successfully withstood the Roman arms, and, in 53 B.C., defeated the Roman general Crassus at Carrhae.

They then resisted the attack of famous Roman military commanders like Mark Antony and Trajan. The Romans had as wholesome a dread of the Parthians as they had of their inveterate foes, the Carthaginians.

In the beginning of the third century A.D., the governor of Pars was Babak, the maternal grandfather of the great Ardshir, the first Sasanian monarch, who was known as Babkan from his ancestor. Darius IV, the last Achaeminian king, had a son named Sasan one of whose descendants, bearing the same family-name, had married a daughter of Babak and was the father of Ardshir. For this reason the dynasty which began with Ardshir was named Sasanian from the family-name of its first monarch.

The last Parthian king Ardvan (Artabanus IV) assigned the governorship of Pars after Babak's death to his own son Behman instead of to Babak's grandson Ardshir. This was deeply resented by Ardshir. Ardshir revolted and vanquished the Parthians in three battles. In the last battle Ardvan was captured and put to death. Thus from 226 A.D. began the famous Sassanian dynasty which traced its descent from the governors of Pars.

The Sassanian dynasty may be considered as one of the great dynasties of history. The Sassanian king was all powerful, and the efficiency of the State depended on the personal greatness and efficiency of the ruler. The founder of the Sasanian dynasty Ardshir Babkan (226 – 240 A.D.) was not only a great conqueror but an able administrator as well. According to the "*Karnameh-e-Artkshtra Papkan*", when that monarch came to the throne Iran was divided into as many as two hundred and forty petty and independent groups; they were all subdued and unified by Ardshir, and Iran once again became one and

undivided. (14) Ardshir adopted in its main lines the organization and institutions of Parthia with the difference that he substituted the unified State for a loose confederation of vassal kingdoms. (15)

The next great monarch and victorious general was Shahpur II (309 – 379 A.D.) whom the Romans could not easily forget. The Arabs knew him as “*Zu al-Aktaf*” (the master of shoulders), for the vanquished Arab chiefs were brought into his presence with their shoulders stitched together. (16) Among other Sasanian rulers King Behram V (420 – 440 A.D.) was known as *Behramgur* because of his fondness of hunting the “Gur” or onager. He was said to be Herculean in stature and adventurous in spirit. He levied tribute from Indian territories. According to Ferdowsi, he had married Sapinud, the daughter of king Shangal of Kannouj. He was the most romantic of all Sassanian kings and numerous legends have been woven round his name.

Khusru I (531 – 579 A.D.) was a great king of this dynasty about whom detailed account is given later. The Sassanian King most given to luxury and pomp was Khusru II, also known as Khusru Parvez, (591 – 628 A.D.), grandson of Khusru I. His glory was eclipsed in his closing years when he sustained a severe defeat at the hands of the Romans. (17) The seeds of the dissolution of the Sasanian dynasty were sown in the reign of this king, who had tasted both the sweets of victory and the bitterness of defeat in ample measure. Within twenty-three years of his death, the Sassanian Empire unexpectedly collapsed and its last unfortunate king Yazdjard Sheharyar was murdered in 651 A.D. Iran had suddenly to face a terrible calamity and that too from a direction from which no disaster was ever dreamt of. The Arabs invaded Iran and extinguished the political power.

Iran came under the Muslim domination and has remained ever since then.

The most illustrious king of the Sassanian dynasty was Khusru I alias Anushirwan (531 – 579 A.D.). Before he came to the throne he had to face the opposition of a revolutionary reformer named Mazdak who flourished in the reign of his father King Kobad. Mazdak propounded a new creed and held that wealth and women were the prime source of sinfulness of the world. According to him sole individual possession of money and women was a crime; wealth and women must be had in common by people in general. This revolutionary idea attracted the riff-raff of the society under his standard and brought about unsettled conditions in the country. Mazdak was not a philosopher nor had he evolved a definite programme and design. The worst evil in Mazdak's creed was the insecurity of female chastity and the consequent disruption of society in the country.

Anushirwan, while yet a prince, demonstrated his uncanny ability and firmness in dealing with Mazdak. Popularity of Mazdak and Mazdaki creed and the nefarious activities carried out by them alarmed Prince Anushirwan who set his mind to get rid of Mazdak. According to the account given by Ferdowsi in his *Shahnameh*, there is an interesting anecdote related to Mazdak. It is said that Prince Anushirwan challenged Mazdak in open court to a religious controversy between his faith, that is, Zoroastrianism, and Mazdaki creed, and terms were set that in the event the Prince was defeated he would embrace his opponent's creed, but if he defeats Mazdak then Mazdak and his chief followers should be handed over to the Prince by the King who should be free to deal with them as he deemed fit and even to slay them. The terms having been agreed, the debate commenced. In the debate, the Prince, by the force of his

reasoning, commonsense and presence of mind, silenced Mazdak. In accordance with the agreed terms Mazdak and his followers were handed over to the Prince. Under orders of the Prince, nearly three thousand of the chief Mazdakis were cruelly done to death in the presence of Mazdak who himself was subsequently hanged. Thus Mazdaki menace which had greatly unsettled the society in Iran was quelled by Prince Anushirwan.

King Kobad had four sons, Anushirwan being the youngest, but in view of the high character, ability and heroism the father left the kingdom to him by his will. Thereupon the three elder brothers revolted with the help of certain disgruntled lords; but they were defeated, captured and put to death by Anushirwan's order. That it was a cut-throat competition for the throne and a merciless action, there is no doubt. Anushirwan took the revolt of his brothers in the sense of a traitorous action against the country which was lawfully consigned to him by his father's testament. Anushirwan had made a rule in life to slay any one who rebelled against the country without being deflected from his purpose by considerations of amity and even kinship. (18)

Anushirwan's action, though perhaps just from his own viewpoint, must be regarded graceless and devoid of generosity and family affection.

Justice and duty, being masculine virtues, sometimes err on the side of severity. Once Anushirwan gave relief to his subjects by ordering the execution of eighty tyrannical tax-collectors. He was unforgiving and relentless to the city that dared to revolt against him. For this very reason he inflicted severe punishment on Antioch as he had on his own brothers. Anushirwan adhered to a self-prescribed standard of justice but never behaved arbitrarily. Capital punishment was meted out to converts, adulterers and rebels without regard to the connection which those individuals bore to the king.

In the *Gulistan* of Sheikh S'adi is recorded an incident which illustrates Anushirwan's anxiety to set a good precedent to his subjects by his own example. This episode cannot of course be said to be historical but it relates one of the numerous legends woven round the name of the great king. Once Anushirwan with his nobles had been to a hunting excursion; when they sat down to their meals it was found that salt had been forgotten in their hurry. A servant was dispatched to fetch salt from the adjoining villages. Seeing the king pay the servant for the salt, a nobleman observed that it was unnecessary to pay for such a trifle as salt, for the king's very name was sufficient to procure anything. Anushirwan replied: "If I make use of my name to obtain gratis a handful of salt, my officers will exploit my name and empty whole villages by cartloads of salt; it is therefore desirable that every man, high or low, should adequately pay for what he buys."

Anushirwan rejoiced to see his subjects happy and prosperous. He was once told that a certain person was fabulously rich. Without betraying any trace of envy, he observed with great delight: "The wealth and prosperity of the man must be presumably due to my justice."

Anushirwan was a God-fearing monarch, and though he wielded autocratic power; as was common in that age, he always made benevolent use of it for the public welfare, and was particularly anxious that justice should be meted out to all. It is said that in the king's palace there hung a long "chain of justice", attached to a bell, by ringing which any one could at any time get his grievance redressed by Anushirwan. It was, perhaps, in following the example of Anushirwan that the Mughal Emperor Jehangir in India had a similar "chain of justice" suspended in his palace. In appreciation of Anushirwan's constant anxiety to

administer justice to all, his grateful subjects bestowed on him the title of "Shah-i-Adil", the Just King. (19)

"The system of slavery, serfdom and forced labour, and the idea of superiority of the race, class and caste, which was so spread in all other contemporaneous civilizations, had never existed in Sasanian Iran," so observed Professor Saeed Nafisy of Teheran University while delivering his lecture in Bombay in 1949. (20) So anxious were the Sasanians to administer justice that when the case of a non-Zoroastrian came before the Court, a spiritual chief belonging to his own religion was attached to the tribunal. (21)

Anushirwan's justice was seasoned with mercy as well as sternness. By his special command the Irannian troops had to be careful not to oppress the conquered enemy unnecessarily, and the soldiers violating this order were severely punished. The treatment shown to the vanquished foes was largely dependent on the stubbornness of their resistance.

After all "peace hath her victories no less renowned than war," and the true glory of Anushirwan's reign lay in the encouragement he gave to art and scholarship. Anushirwan spent considerable time in war and yet he was a devotee of learning, fond of collecting books, and appreciative of the worth of scholars. He was himself well-read in the works of Plato and Aristotle, (22) which were translated into Pahlavi by his orders.

It was in the reign of Anushirwan that the game of chess was introduced into Iran from India. According to Ferdowsi, an Indian tributary king sent this game to Anushirwan together with the tribute. (23)

Anushirwan can claim still more intimate cultural relations with India. He had come to know of a miraculous

Indian herb which was said to revive the dead, and he asked his personal physician, Barzu, to fetch it from India. Barzu came to India but all his endeavours ended in disappointment, till he was asked by an aged Indian saint to give up his fruitless attempts, for education, said the Indian saint, was the only means to revive the "dead", and the gift of knowledge was the gift of life itself. The saint further suggested that in the library of certain Indian king there was a book, "so full of wise says and modern instances" as may be supposed to revive the "dead". Barzu procured this life-giving miracle from the Indian king and took it to Iran where it was translated into Pahlavi by the order of Anushirwan. This very work is famous as the Fables of Pilpai or Bidpai, but, in fact, it is a collection of stories whose origin is traceable to that inexhaustible mine of wisdom known as the "*Panchtantra*". In this great Sanskrit work, as in Aesop's Fables, beasts are made to talk in human language, and the stories are highly didactic and instructive. The Pahlavi version of the times of Anushirwan is lost, but from it was prepared an Arabic version by Ibn Muquffa after the Arab conquest of Iran and named "*Kalilah wa Damanah*." (24)

Numerous books on religion, ethics, and history, were published in the reign of Anushirwan and were subsequently translated, but these Pahlavi works have not survived the tyranny of time. Many of the Arabs had based their scientific and philosophical works on the translations of these very Pahlavi volumes. (25)

Anushirwan was a mighty conqueror. The Romans, who were often defeated by Anushirwan, not only stood in dread of him but also held him in respect. The Turks also were awed by his might and tribute was paid to him from India. (26)

On the whole it may be said that in historical times there was no king in Iran greater than Anushirwan, who was to his

country what Ashoka and Akbar were to India. Anushirwan can easily stand comparison with Akbar. Both were brave and warlike conquerors and had considerably extended their empires. Khusru Parwez, the grandson of Anushirwan, widened the limits of the empire still further, but ultimately lost what he had gained; and it was in Khusru Parwez's reign that the seeds of the decline of Iran were sown.

The Romans always referred to Anushirwan with respect. All the historians of Iran are fascinated by his greatness. Gibbon, in his great work, (27) comparing Anushirwan with his illustrious contemporary Justinian, Emperor of Constantinople, pays a grudging tribute to the former in the following words: "In the long competition between Chosroes (Anushirwan) and Justinian, the advantage, both of merit and fortune, is almost always on the side of the barbarian". This shows the bias of Western historians. In spite of Anushirwan's laudable achievements, the Western historians were always biased towards Oriental monarchs and called them "barbarians". Anushirwan led his armies till he was fourscore years of age, fighting in person in more than twenty battles, wherein he invariably succeeded except in his retreat in the encounter at Melitene. Rawlinson observes that "the intellectual power and generosity of vision" displayed by Anushirwan would be rare to find in Asiatic monarchs. (28)

Anushirwan's private life was above board and unsullied. He was always extremely anxious to advance the welfare of his people, redress the grievances of the poor, augment the prosperity of his subjects and eliminate all traces of injustice and tyranny from the country. No doubt, in early years of his reign, he was stern and sometimes cruel in dispensing justice, but age mellowed him down with the softer virtues till he really deserved the title of "Adil" or Just. His own name was Khusru

but there is considerable appropriateness in the name of Anushirwan by which he has become famous in the East. Anushirwan means a sweet or celestial soul, and indeed this great soul has left behind him sweet and fragrant memories. It was during the benign and just reign of Anushirwan that glory and splendour of Iran reached culmination in the pre-Islamic era.

From the time the Arabs conquered Iran in the seventh century A.D. and uptil the dawn of the eleventh century A.D., ancient splendour and glory of Iran had a set-back and was almost consigned to oblivion. Then came Ferdowsi, the prince of poets of unusual caliber, first in the court of Samanids and then in the court of Mahmud of Ghazni, who sang the glories of ancient Iranian kings and awakened a new consciousness in Iran. All old heroes were recapitulated by him and he, by his world-renowned *Shahnameh*, gave a new lease of life to, and rejuvenated interest in, the ancient Iranian culture and civilization.

PHILOSOPHICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The monotheism of Zoroaster was adopted by the Achaeminians with enthusiasm. All the extant inscriptions of Darius abound with expressions of praise and devotion to Ahura Mazda to whom all his exploits are inscribed. The rudimentaries of Zoroastrianism were described by Herodotus a century later. He remarks that the Iranians do not use statues, temples, or altars in worship, nor consider the gods anthropomorphic like the Greeks. According to him, Iranians call the whole vault of heaven God and that they believe in the immortality of the soul. Herodotus himself was quite confused in describing the pattern of the creed of Zoroaster. It can, however, be deduced that some

of the loftiest flights of Israelite religion, such as Yahweh in Isaiah, were greatly and emphatically influenced by Zoroastrianism and Iranian philosophical developments.

It may be mentioned that the comparative mildness of the ancient Iranian regimes forms part of that moral superiority over previous empires which bestows a legacy for keen consideration of posterity. "As conquerors the Persian were restrained from slaughtering the vanquished for slaughter's sake by some tenets of their religion, which impelled them generally to follow the good principle, that of Light against Darkness, of Ahura Mazda (Ormuzd) against Angra Mainyu (Ahriman). Owing partly to its central situation and partly to this respect and tolerance for foreign peoples and their beliefs, the Persian Empire became a great assimilator of religions, preparing the way for later universal systems." (29)

It was, in fact, in the third century A.D. that an important early Iranian philosophical system, Manichaeism, was introduced. Mani, an Iranian, is believed to have lived between 216 and 276 A.D. and, among other things, expounded that man's soul springs from the Kingdom of Light, seeks escape from the Kingdom of Darkness, the body. He taught a system of thought compounded of Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Christianity. He set out to discover the common truths in the religions before his time and formulated what was probably the first such synthesis, in the history of religions. Mani, for his synthetic, highly advanced and revolutionary ideas, was executed in the reign of Behram I who handed him over to the Magi, the priestly class, who were Mani's mortal enemies and were jealous of him for their own power.(30)

The philosophical learning in Iran under the earlier Sasanian kings was regarded of some considerable importance and greatly valued by the Western philosophers, such as, Plotinus (205 ? – 278 A.D.), who was a contemporary of Mani. Plotinus was Egyptian born Roman philosopher, whose philosophic rendition is known as *NOUS*, meaning rational mind. He held that the doctrine of *Logos*, the Word, is the creative, actively expressed and revelatory thought and Will of God which is at once distinguished and identified with Him. According to him, the *Logos*, appears as the creative and form-giving aspects of Intelligence. God is the Rational Principle, the First and the Highest Intellect and is regarded as the World Reason.

Plotinus, in fact, was very keen to come to Iran to learn the philosophical developments taking place in Iran, and for this purpose accompanied Emperor Gordian on his campaign against Persia. But, because of the inglorious campaign of the Emperor Gordian in 242 A.D., which ended in failure, he could not fulfil his desire. (31)

It was, however, a different story under Anushirwan. Anushirwan had a genuine love of learning. He is credited to have established a university at Jundi-Shapur. When the reports of philosophical attainments of Anushirwan reached the West, as a result of this, the West came to believe that a real philosopher-king had, at last, arisen in the East who has brought about the realization of Plato's Republic on earth. Anushirwan encouraged greatly the advancement of learning in Iran and, it can be said, that "in some measure facilitated the development in later times of Sufism and mysticism in that country." (32)

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

The neglect which has engulfed Iran and Iranian history is the more remarkable when the range of splendour of her achievements are considered. The reason, in part, is that Iran has lacked a chronicler of her own and whatever information we have obtained, however scanty, is derived from Jews and Greeks, who were certainly not friends of Iran.

Iran, like India and Egypt, also glories in her ancient past. Iranian ruins, although now in their dilapidated condition, are like historical documents which bear witness to the ancient greatness and glory of Iran.

From the extant ruins of edifices built under the Achaeminians, it would appear that Iran derived inspiration from Egypt, Assyria and Babylonia. Iranians borrowed and assimilated many architectural ideas from other races as well and stamped them with their own originality. The chief surviving examples of Achaeminian architecture, the great platforms and palaces of Persepolis and Susa, obviously owe their inspiration to Assyria, Babylonia and Egypt whencefrom was derived the conceptions of these huge piles, approached stairways adorned with sculptured friezes. They, however, added distinctive features of their own: the columns were taller and slender in proportion with finessè peculiar to Iran.

The vast palaces and audience halls of Darius and Xerxes were neither fortifications nor temples, but were a sort of pavilions, consisting of a light roof over a forest of columns where the Great King gave audience to ambassadors and other dignitaries as, for example, the 'Hall of a Hundred Columns' at Perspolis. A typical feature of these huge halls were long friezes sculptured in relief with a procession consisting of tribute bearers from the subject sates. These sculptured reliefs show a

remarkable advance in delicacy and refinement and subsequently influenced Greek sculpture, especially the temple friezes, like that of Parthenon. (33)

Observing the Persopolitan ruins, Lord Curzon expressed in amazement when he declared that "no more sumptuous frame-work of magnificence was ever wrought by man." (34)

Of Parthian architectural art very little survives, and that too not of the ruling classes but of the various subject peoples. The few Parthian buildings extant or sites excavated, nearly all of them in the western part of the empire and, it is observed, that in all of them Hellenistic influence is preponderant. (35) The chief artistic products of the Parthians are the coins. They reflect most clearly the gradual orientalizing of the Parthian Empire: from Greek influence or legends to Pahlavi influence. (36)

With the advent of Sasanian period the Iranian national spirit re-asserted itself. As soon as a central government was established in Iran, the aim of the Sasanians was to imitate and glorify the old Achaeminian Empire. In the domain of architecture, Sasanians reverted to the pattern of buildings of Achaeminians: open vaulted hall similar to the *Iwan* at Ctesiphon, or *Tak-i-Kasra*, or buildings at Firuzabad. Familiarity with the great *Iwan* at Ctesiphon is the chief characteristic of Sasanian architecture. (37) Similarly, at *Tak-i-Bostan* – 'Arch of the Garden', near Karmanshah, not far from the rock of Behistun, constructed under Khusrau II, traces of influence of Rome and Byzantine are discernible, particularly in certain capitals and hunting scenes in relief. (38)

In the recent years, many fire temples constructed in the Sasanian period have been found in Iran. They consist essentially of a dome on squinches supported by four arches

one on each side. The altar for the sacred fire stands usually somewhere under the dome. (39)

In the long history of Iran, painting developed only at a comparatively late stage. It was, however, in the Sasanian period (224-639 A.D.) that a return to national ideals and a deliberate revival of Achaeminian monumental style was greatly cherished. Traces of this art appeared on the cliff-side at Dukhtar-i-Anushirwan or in the plains at Susa and Ctesiphon where only wall painting was possible. In these cases the work was executed in tempera colours on a plastered ground. The subjects, usually, were monumental figures in an architectural setting where the drapery was shaded in the Hellenistic tradition. More significant practice was painting in solid ground colours — blue at Susa, red at Toprak-Kala in Khiva and Bamiyan. It can be conjectured that painting under the Sasanians may have held a big enough place to have influenced the sculptural style of rock carvings.

In the domain of minor arts, the Achaeminians showed great originality. The principal forms in which it found expressions were items of utility in bronze and silver, such as, cups, bowls, jewellery, and harness trappings, the favourite possessions of the people.

Sasanians have also left great many specimen of their minor works of art, such as, motives on vases and excellent series of silver bowls which date from the early Sasanian period, that is, from 388 to 532 A.D. (40) Vase motives, with plants springing from them and twisting in identically balancing curves, were extremely popular. (41) Similarly, the silver bowls usually depicted the monarch in some honorific situation. All these pieces together with series of bronze vessels are of magnificent quality. (42)

Under the Sasanians, considerable Iranian influence in Byzantium is discernible, particularly on stone sculpture, which bears the favourite Iranian animal motives. Also, in metal-work and other silver-work of early Byzantine times shows equally close Iranian connection.

It was, however, in the art of textiles that Iranian influence on the west, particularly to the Byzantine, was most obvious. (43) A number of textiles bearing animal designs and motifs, which were intensely popular in the Sasanian art, were also copied in the Byzantine world. The magnificent products of Iranian looms made a great impression in the west. Sasanian textiles were much sought after and admired as far west as Gaul. (44)

To sum up, I consider it apposite to mention that the general view, particularly of the west, of the ancient Iran of pre-Islamic times, was one of deep respect for her military prowess; for her glory and splendours; a curiosity about her religious beliefs mixed with a fear of their contagious qualities; appreciation for her philosophical attainments; and, finally, admiration for her beautiful textiles.

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Appendix - II

PERSIAN INFLUENCE ON ANCIENT GREECE

ABSTRACT

The Achaeminian Empire (550-330 B.C) stretched from the Indus in the East to the Mediterranean Sea, beyond the northern part of the Aegean Sea, including part of Greece, in the West. At its height, the Empire spanned three continents – Asia, Africa and Europe. (1) The Achaeminian dynasty draws its name from king Achaemenas who ruled Persia between 705 B.C. and 675 B.C. The Achaeminian Empire was the biggest empire the world had seen then. (2) This Empire instituted infrastructures, such as postal system, road systems, and the usage of an official language Aramac all over the Empire. (3) Inspite of Greece having been a part of the vast Achacminian Empire, it has always been close to Western Europe. Right from the fall of Byzantium in 1453, and especially from the middle of the eighteenth century when Johann Joachim Winckelman (1717-1768 A.D.), German art historian and archaeologist, penned *History of Ancient Art* in 1764, which became a classic of European literature, Greece occupied a privileged status as the cradle of western civilization. (4) Another reason which can be attributed to this is that very impressive Greek collection of literary, scientific and other texts have survived, whereas there is no such collection from Persia. Even *Avesta*, the religious text, which has survived was only codified under the Sassanians in the third/fourth century A.D. Another important reason which can be assigned is that in the Greek historical writings, the authors make it abundantly clear that the Persians were merely a bunch of decadent barbarians who could be ignored in the history of mankind. (5) The Greeks had the best culture and nothing else was there in other civilizations which could be added. Western scholars, from the fall of Constantinople in 1453, at the hands of Turks, to the middle of the eighteenth century, accepted this judgement and were totally

imbued with Greek culture and were unable to conceptualize oriental influences of any nature and consigned Oriental culture, including Persian culture, to oblivion. This hostile attitude long existed in Europe along with that Orient is mysterious, unintelligible and unfathomable and not worth exploring.

With the emergence of comparative linguistics, or Indo-European linguistics, towards the end of the eighteenth century in Europe, particularly when translation of the *Avesta* was undertaken by French scholar Abraham Hycinthe Anquetil – Duperron in 1771, the scholars and historians sat up to notice the developments which had taken place in the Orient, especially in ancient India and Persia, that they started discovering that the ancient Persian and Greek cultures did not exist in isolation, that there was cross-fertilization, and that Greece was greatly influenced by Persia in architecture, politics and religion.

BRIEF HISTORY

In 545 B.C., the Persian king Cyrus the Great conquered the Anatolियan Peninsula which is variously known as Asia Minor, the Levant, and is now known as Turkey. (6) The coastal area of Asia Minor was inhabited by the Greeks and they had formed into city-states which again collectively formed into Ionian Confederacy, which, in fact, has given the name of “Yunan” to Greeks in Persian and Arabic literatures. Some of the city-states were also conquered by Cyrus the Great. (7) His son Cambyes added those parts of the Levant that had not been conquered yet, and also went on to add Egypt to the Achaeminian Empire in about 525 B.C. (8) Under his successor, Darius I the Great (522-486 B.C.), a punitive expedition was undertaken to chastise the Greeks of Europe who had provided

help to some of the revolting city-states of Asia Minor in 499 B.C., where Thrace was subdued, Macedonia and Datis were conquered. However, the Persians against the Athenians suffered a defeat at Marathon in 490 B.C. (9) In the Greco-Persian Wars fought between 492-449 B.C., the number of victories in the battles favoured the Persians by far, but the one event from whence the Persian dominance ended was the battle fought in 479 B.C. between Greek Alliance and forces of Persian Emperor Xerxes I at Plataea which was won by the Greeks and the Persian commander Mardonius was slain (10). Battle of Plataea marked the beginning of Greek offensive against the Persians. This led to the formation of The Delian League (11) of the Greeks under the Athenian leadership which continued to campaign against Persia for the subsequent three decades in which Europe was freed of Persian possession and even the Ionian cities were also freed. Some historical sources suggest the end of hostilities was marked by a peace treaty between Athens and Persia – the so-called Peace of Callias established around 449 B.C. (12) Callias was an Athenian politician who negotiated peace between Athens and Persia which gave autonomy to the Ionian states in Asia Minor, prohibited establishment of Persian Satrapies on the Aegean Sea coast, and Athens agreed not to interfere with Persian possessions in Asia Minor, Cyprus, Libya or Egypt. This treaty officially concluded the long intermittent Greco-Persian Wars.

PERSIAN CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON GREEKS

In the later half of the sixth century B.C., as earlier mentioned, parts of Greek world came under the control of the Achaeminians of Persia which marked the beginning of contacts between the Persian and Greek cultures. (13) Given the dominant position of Persia at that time of their relations with Greeks, it is but natural there to have been Persian cultural influence upon

the Greeks. (14) Persian and Greek cultures did not exist in isolation. There was cross fertilization, each influenced the other. In this context, it must be pointed out that Persian influence on the Greeks was greatly exerted in the fields of architecture, politics and religion.

ARCHITECTURE

It was in architecture that Persian influence on the Greeks can be discerned and it was in the architectural edifices constructed in Greece after the Battle of Plataea which was won by the Greeks in 479 B.C. It is testified by the accounts of Herodotus, the historian, that after the Greek victory at Plataea considerable booty was found and divided between the towns and cities that had shared in the fighting, and everybody received a fair share. So did Athens. A lot of booty was carried to Athens including much silver, gold and other luxuries from the Battle field in Plataea. With the wealth so gained, Athens constructed magnificent architectural edifices. One such edifice was Odeon, or the Music Room.

O D E O N

When a Persian king went to war he used to go with all the paraphernalia of army commanders and many courtiers with caldrons of gold and silver. (15) In this way he could live like a king and also could give rewards to brave warriors. The pavilion of the great king, after king's departure, in which Mardonius had his lodgings prior to his defeat, had received the full attention of the victorious Athenians. While constructing the Odeon the wooden structure of the pavilion was replaced by the Greeks by a stone structure which was made into a music

hall (odeon). This is confirmed by Plutarch of Chaeronea, a Roman citizen (46-120 A.D.) and a Greek historian, biographer and essayist, in the following words –

“The Odeon, or music room, which in its interior was full of seats and ranges of pillars, and outside had its roof made to slope and descend from one single point at top, was constructed, we are told, in imitations of the king of Persia’s pavilion. This was done by Pericles’s order.” (16)

When the Odeon of Pericles was excavated, it turned out to have almost the same dimension as the famous Hall of the Hundred Columns at Persepolis, the Capital of the Achaemenian Empire. The similarity is too obvious to be coincidental. The pavilion was perhaps a copy of the Hall of the Hundred Columns, and Odeon was just a copy of this copy. (17)

PRYTANEUM

Prytaneum, town-hall of a city-state, in Greece was regarded as the religious and political centre of the community and thus formed the nucleus of the government and of the community. In Athens, Prytaneum was built in 465 B.C. The building was in the form of a circle and very simple. The Athenians called the building the *tholos* (round building). The building looked like the parasol and had a round pointed roof and can be assumed as a replica of the parasols used by the Persian kings and their Satraps. The difference is that the building is large in construction and built with a more durable material. (18) Parasol of the Persian kings provided a model on which the Athenians used their own ingenuity to construct the *tholos* or Prytaneum.

PARTHENON RELIEF

The construction of the Parthenon in Athens was started in 499 B.C. under their leader Pericles. As a temple dedicated to Athena, the protecting goddess of Athens, it was the place par excellence where the Athenians could show their might and also because Athens was the leader of the Delian League, a position by virtue of which it imposed tribute and, in due course of time, people started to speak of an “Athenian empire.”

Parthenon relief on the eastern wall of the audience hall, which was called Apadana, is a part of the decoration of a large stairs, where the subject nations came and visited the great king during the New Year’s festival and bring their tribute, is a replica of the relief on the palace walls of Persepolis built by Darius some seventy years earlier. Relief of the Parthenon is currently in the British Museum in London and forms part of the collection usually referred to as Elgin marbles. In both the reliefs, the central parts are the most important. In both works of art, the important figure is surrounded by an entourage: in Persepolis relief the figure is of the king with an entourage of officials surrounding him; in the Parthenon relief, the entourage consists of gods and the central figure is of basileus and basillina (king and queen).

Another similarity in both the buildings, that is Persepolis palace and the Parthenon, can be observed is that both buildings were the focal points of politics, religion and finance as both of them also served as the treasury of respective empires. It would appear that Athenian artists had learned from their older Ionian colleagues and artists known for stone sculpture, who had helped in building the Persepolis relief. It can also be observed that in the Parthenon relief, the Persian ideal of “Unity under the King” has been ‘translated’ in Greece to suit Greek tastes.

Summing up, we can say Persian influence on Greek art, especially art of architecture, existed in ample measure. The same can also be said for politics which I will now discuss.

POLITICS

The Delian League was formed as the voluntary Confederacy of Greek autonomous city-states under the leaderships of Athens to continue fighting the Persian Empire after the Greek victory in the battle of Plataea in 479 B.C. The League kept united all the members so long as they fought their common enemy, the Persians. It was this League out of which came about the Athenian Empire.

Shortly after the inception of the League, Athens began to use the League's navy for its own purposes. This behavior frequently led to conflict between Athens and some of the member states. By 431 B.C., Athens' heavy-handed control of the League prompted the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War and, on the conclusion of hostilities in 404 B.C., the League was disbanded. Out of this arose the Athenian Empire. The member states who opposed Athens were brutally dealt with and those who hated to pay tribute to Athens were attacked and submitted. The smaller city-states came under the protection of Athens, disbanded their navy, paid tribute in cash, and lost their autonomy.

Since Athenians had no experience of ruling an empire, whereas Persians stood in a long tradition, they copied tried-out Persian traditions. It was an obvious thing to do. It was indeed wisdom of Greeks that they used knowledge developed by others. Among the many traditions copied by the Greeks, two stand out, namely, 1) the tribute system, and 2) the appointment of episcopus.

TRIBUTE SYSTEM

Following the pattern of Persians who had imposed tribute on the Ionian towns, Athens received tribute from the member states of the Delian League. (19) Athens continued the system even after disbanding the League and would revise the tariff every four years. (20) This fiscal organization the Athenians borrowed from the Persians. In Theory, the subject towns could negotiate about the amount they owed to their masters first Persians and then the Athenians but this did not really exist. The subject states were made to pay the tribute demanded of them.

APPOINTMENT OF EPISCOPUS

Every town in Athenian Empire was supervised by an episcopus or overseer in subject states. This was very much akin to a magistrate who kept an "eye" on the town where he was posted. He controlled the payment of tributes, prevent insurrections, and report all the matter to the government back home.

This was borrowed from the Achaemenian Empire. Darius maintained an espionage system by appointing in every subject state known as "King's Eyes or King's Ears". These officials were appointed by the king to inform him of what was going on in the empire. They supervised the policy of Satraps, the payment of tribute and oversaw the other events happening in the state and reported to the king.

Because of the duties and responsibilities of the "King's Eye or King's Ears" of Persians and Episcopus (pl. Episcopi) of Athens were identical, Athens probably borrowed this system from the Persians. (21)

RELIGION

In some of the works of classical Hellenic (Greek) authors, it would appear that they were obsessed with Persian culture. (22) It is certain that in the field of religion there was indeed Persian influence on the Greeks. (23) The most important influence of Achaeminian religion involved its relation to Pre-Socratic philosophy in Greece. Pre-Socratic philosophy involving mysticism, music, mythology and other such domains were very much associated within the domain of Greek religion. (24)

According to M.L. West (*Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient*, London, 1971, pp.240-242) it is quite significant consideration of the dynamic of Greek receptivity to foreign intellectual influences. One influence was the promise of celestial immortality which began to appear in Greek religion in the fifth century B.C. and which was the direct result of Zoroastrian lore brought by the Magi. He also asserts that Zoroastrianism influenced Heraclitus, 6th to 5th century B.C. Greek philosopher, which, in turn, influenced Greek religion in the Presocratic era.

Some of the Hellenic authors also do begrudgingly acknowledge that Zoroaster was an original philosopher and wise-one from whom the Greeks learnt much, especially the recognition of Ahura Mazda as the Creator. (25) The Magi, who served as the priests in the Achaeminian court, were very much part of the retinue of Xerxes (519-465 B.C.) during his campaigns against the Greeks where he set out in 480 B.C. (26) The Greeks learned about Zoroaster's teachings, philosophy and science from the Magi. This was learnt by them between 480 B.C. and the reign of Alexander the Great in 300 B.C. Much of this information had been stored in the great Library

at Alexandria in Egypt. The Library was founded by Ptolemy II Philadelphius (283-246 B.C.) and had many rolls containing the teachings of Zoroaster and were perhaps compiled by a Greek scholar by the name of Hermippus in about 200 B.C. in Egypt. The Library was accidentally burned during Julius Caesar's campaign in Egypt.

CONCLUSION

Many things which are considered to have originated in Greece and are now known as "Western" culture, art, and architecture actually originated in ancient Persia. Persia was the centre of the world before and during the Greco-Persian Wars of 492-449 B.C. In fact, then the whole world looked to Persia and everybody tried to model everything after the Persian way.

Even after the formation of the Delian League in 499 B.C., Greece was just a coalition of small city-states. Persia upto that time was the biggest empire to exist and, if we look dispassionately, much of today's culture can trace its origin in ancient Persian art, architecture and culture.

Greco-Western culture, art and architecture, which have dominated the West since the days of Alexander the Great, actually evolved from ancient Persia. Greek and Persian architectures were similar in many ways. The most ancient Persian architecture found was in the ancient cities of Susa and Elam is Persia dating from 1600-1000 B.C. (27) One notable aspect of Persian architecture imitated by the Greeks was the famous columns; the Greek columns from the capital to abacus, the annulated, and the echinus, is a near copy of Persian columns which date approximately 500 years before the Greek coalition or confederation.

We have seen in the fields of architecture and politics, the Athenians of the fifth century B.C. copied several Persian innovations. In the field of architecture, it happened in two ways: practical and ideological. In the practical sphere, it can be found in the Persian rhytons (drinking vessels) which appear in Athens suddenly after the battle of Plataea; then in buildings of Odeon and Prytaneum. In the ideological sphere it can be found in the Parthenon relief where the Persian ideal of "Unity under the King" has been "translated" to Greece. The images and ideas were adapted to Greek taste which made the work of art more accessible. This would sum up the Persian influence on Greek art.

In the field of politics also we can discern Persian influence on Greeks. First the Persians, then the Athenians, were masters of the Greek towns in Ionia (Asia Minor). Since the Athenians had no experience in ruling an empire, whereas Persian stood in a long tradition, the Athenians copied Persian measures, such as tribute system was introduced, navy was organized on the pattern of Persian navy in the Mediterranean Sea, and episcopi, or the "eyes of the king" were appointed to oversee the happenings in the empire.

In the field of religion Zoroastrianism greatly influenced the Presocratic (28) philosophers of Greece of both 6th and 5th century B.C. whose efforts were directed to the investigation of the ultimate basis and essential nature of the external world. They emphasized the rational unity of things, and rejected mythological explanations of the world.

"The reign of the Achaeminians set new ideals before mankind – the ideals for the world's good government with the utmost of unity and cohesion combined with the largest possible freedom for the development of race and individual within the

large organism. The tolerance and kindness displayed by Cyrus and his successors in the Achaeminian period towards the Jews and the Greeks was, indeed, very favourable one and the Iranians appeared not so much as enemies of freedom to them, but as benevolent monotheists whose domination was more acceptable to them." (29) This principle dominated the art of governance under the Achaeminians. Even when Alexander the Great conquered vast territories in Asia and Egypt from 330 B.C., he followed the same principle of governance.

Summing up, we can say all these measures were adopted by the Greeks in the fitness of things and sound policies to use knowledge developed by others. But the nineteenth century European scholars and historians have often ignored the Persian contribution to Greek culture. They simply believed in "Greek Miracle" and were unable to conceptualize Oriental influences. Cultural contacts were completely ignored.

Today, in a world in which cross-fertilization and clashes between cultures can no longer be ignored, scholars are now more interested in cultural contacts. This perspective does more justice to the complexities that existed when two cultures encountered each other. Now scholars have woken up to trace Oriental influences on European art, architecture, politics and religion.

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APPENDIX - III

CONTRIBUTION OF ISLAMIC CULTURE TO WORLD'S CIVILIZATION

Contribution of Islamic Culture to World's Civilization

Based on NIZAM ENDOWMENT LECTURE

Delivered by the Author

AT VISVA-BHARATI SHANTINIKETAN ON 13-03-2010

At the outset I must humbly submit that I consider it my privilege to be here and my this visit is a pilgrimage to the hallowed precincts of this world-renowned centre of learning founded by the Nobel Laureate Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore.

It is indeed a travesty of facts that people at large are unaware of the glorious achievements and contributions made by Islamic culture to world's literary, intellectual, cultural and scientific development. By this opportunity, it would by my humble attempt to acquaint you with the salient points in this respect.

When Islam began that dramatic career which was destined to plant a new form of culture in countries far and wide, it set out from regions where culture was in an utmost primitive and backward state. Such culture as existed in Arabia before the advent of Islam was either a sterile survival from the remote past, or barbarous in nature. The Islamic culture developed from a tribal culture into a world civilization in a rather brief span of time. It came to possess a highly articulated coherence and it has in the course of its development been involved in encounters with many cultures and civilizations which speeded up the quick growth of Islamic cultural consciousness from the confines of narrow mentality of desert nomads to that of urban merchants, and from a small territorial limitations to a universal basis. There is no denying the fact that Islamic culture derived its spiritual

complexion from Arabia but its material texture was fashioned, in lands where culture was a vital force.

The Arabs assimilated knowledge in diverse aspects gathered from Greeks, Iranians and Indians and continued, preserved, cultivated and, on a number of points, developed and perfected this knowledge.

Islamic culture is a term primarily used in secular academia to describe the cultural practices common to historically Islamic people. As the religion of Islam originated in Arabia, the early forms of Muslim culture were predominantly Arab. With the rapid expansion of the Islamic empires, Muslims, in their early stages, were greatly influenced by Greek elements, Iranian genius and Indian thought which characterized Islamic culture in most splendid magnificence. Subsequently, it derived its material texture from Turkish, Mongol and other cultures and races with whom it came in contact with.

Islamic culture constitutes complete system of thought and behavior growing out of fundamental impulse and enveloping man in all his relations – to God, the universe, and himself. Islam is a revealed religion in which the revealing agent forms an integral part of the faith. The creed links two fundamental verities: "There is no god but God (Allah) and Muhammad is the Prophet of God." To himself, the Prophet is a mere man; there is no claim to divinity. The Holy Quran is the book revealed through him. As time went by, the Prophet's life came to be considered the ideal life by the faithful and his personality as the quintessence of perfection (*Insan al-Kamil*), human and super human. With the further passage of time, the Prophet came to be understood as the greatest ascetic, the intercessor with God for the believers, the mystic saint, the

descendant of Adam, the cause of creation, and the hub of universe.

Islam has never developed sacramental mysteries; it has remained faithful to the impulse of its origin by showing erring man the path to paradise in a purely rational manner while emphasizing that man, rewarded or punished, remains a man and God does not descend to earth to lift man beyond himself.

In Islam there are the fundamental obligations imposed on each and every believer. Islam is built upon five essentials: testimony that there is no god but God and Muhammad is the Prophet of God; prayers; the poor-rate (Zakat); pilgrimage to Mecca; and fast in the month of Ramazan.

Before the coming of the Prophet, the so-called Arab world had shown no signs of intellectual growth. Poetry and oratory formed the favourite objects of pursuit among pre-Islamic Arabs. But the teachings of the Prophet proved to be a source of inspiration to the awakened energies of the race, so much so, that as Islam spread farther afield contact with alien races enlarged its outlook. Moreover, as it acquired a wider outlook, the natural consequence was that a new cultural element, purely secular in nature, began to assert itself at the expense of spiritual supremacy. Islamic culture, it should be remembered, is a distinctive art of living, developed through centuries of trial and error, to suit the exact temperament of its people.

The Prophet's passionate devotion to knowledge and learning was responsible for creating an incentive for the pursuit of knowledge and desire of learning among his adherents. In spite of the upheaval of the Arab race under the early Caliphs, the tradition of the Master was kept up by Ali and Ibn Abbas, cousin of the Prophet and ancestor of the Abbasid Caliphs. Both these persons were immensely admired for their knowledge of

sacred tradition, jurisprudence and for their skill in commenting on the Quran.

GREEK INFLUENCES

Although the accession of the Umayyads (661-749 A.D.) to the rulership of Islam was a blow to the speedy progress of knowledge and liberalism in the Muslim world, yet Damascus, the then capital, became the gathering place of intellectuals of the many races who had come under the sway of Islam. It was here that the controversies of Greek and Saracen furnished a strong incentive to the study of dialectics and Greek philosophy. Greek philosophy as represented by Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and others and Greek science had battered the walls of orthodoxy. Every advance in thought, in insight into the ways of nature, every attempt devoted to developing the offerings of classical antiquity was pressure brought to bear on theology to catch up with the intellectual climate of the period so as to justify itself before the intellectual leadership. Hellenized intelligentsia played a vital role in moulding the Saracen thought and laid the foundation for intellectual advancement of early Muslims. As a result, towards the end of the Umayyad rule, several Muslim thinkers came into importance whose ideas and conceptions materially moulded the thought of generations to come.

IRANIAN INFLUENCES

A remarkable change, however, occurred in the later half of the eighth century A.D., when the seat of government was moved from Damascus to Baghdad. This change of capital marked an epoch in the history of Islam for henceforth Persian

influence predominated in its development. In blending of Sasanian and Islamic traditions the religious element was clearly the only Arab contribution whereas in all other spheres of life Persian thought, poetry, life style and tried-out well-established institutions were adopted.

Even under the Umayyads Persian influence began to be strongly felt. Umayyad Caliph Sulaiman had once remarked in 715 A.D. – “I am astonished at these Iranians: they ruled the country for a thousand years and never once needed the help of the Arab, but we have not ruled even for a century and yet we cannot do without Iranian help!”

The rise of the Abbasids in about 750 A.D., inaugurated the epoch of greatest power, splendour, and prosperity of Islamic rule. It was at this time that the literary and scientific activity of the Muslims commenced in right earnest. By now the Arabs had settled in towns. Their settlement resulted in their devotion to the cultivation of arts and letters with the same enthusiasm which they had displayed in the pursuit of war.

Once the torch of knowledge was lighted, it facilitated the lighting of numerous other lamps: scholars from all over the world were attracted to Baghdad to tackle various branches of learning: literature, philosophy, astronomy, medical science, history etc. received their attention with laudable results. The intellectual horizon of the people was broadened and their views and attitude became extremely tolerant. The light of Iran which had dimmed for almost two centuries was once again illuminated.

In Baghdad, of the numerous academies, colleges, schools which filled the city, two institutions were of foremost importance because of their richness and the number of their students. They were Nizamiyah and Mustansariyah; the first

established in the fifth century of the Hira and the second two centuries later. The Nizamiyah was founded by Nizam-ul-mulk, the friend of Omar Khayyam (of Rubaiyat fame) and the Vazir of the turks, Alp Arslan and Malik Shah. The Mustansariyah was founded in 1234 A.D. in the words of G. Le Strange, in *Baghdad during the Abbasid Calliphate*, “in stateliness of ornament and sumptuousness of furniture, in spaciousness and the wealth of its pious foundations, the Mustasiriyah surpassed everything that had previously been seen In Islam.”

INDIAN INFLUENCES

By the order of the second Abbasid Caliph Mansur (754-784 A.D.) literary and scientific works in foreign languages were first translated into Arabic. Numerous Indian books on religion, ethics, and history, which were originally translated into Pahlavi under the Sasanians in Iran, were subsequently translated from Pahlavi to Arabic. The inexhaustible mine of wisdom known as the ‘*Panchtantra*’ from Pahlavi was translated into Arabic by Ibn Muqaffa (died 757 A.D.) and named “*Kalilah wa Damanah*. The famous collection of Indian fables, ‘*Hitopadesha*’, or book of Useful Counsels, was translated into Arabic.

The medical works of Charaka, generally believed to be court physician of Kanishka, and Susruta, in Sanskrit, were first translated into Pahlavi and were later, under the Abbasids, translated into Arabic, and from Arabic into Latin which became standard authorities in medieval Europe.

We know that in early Abbasid period Indian medicine and mathematics were eagerly studied and emulated by Muslim scholars. Figures in mathematics originated in India and in the Islamic world came to be known as ‘*Hindsa*’ which were adopted. Just as the mathematicians borrowed largely from

India, so did the astronomers. Ibrahim al-Fazari (d.777 A.D.) and his son who also translated Indian works into Arabic on this subject, in fact, formed the basis of al-Khawarizmi's world-famous astronomical tables. Al-Fazari presented at the court of Caliph Mansur a learned Hindu named Manka who introduced the *Sindhind*, "*The Sidhanta*", a treatise on astronomy according to Hindu methods. This work was translated by Al-Fazari the younger.

We also know that Greek logic and philosophy were welcomed into Muslim civilization at about the same time; and again that Iranian administrative techniques and even important elements of Iranian political thinking were adopted and acted upon by the leading strata of the Islamic world. All these and similar elements incisively changed the culture and the civilization of Islam.

EDUCATION AND LEARNING

The education given in the early Abbasid period bore some resemblance to contemporary church education in Europe. Charlemagne the Great, who came to the throne in 768 A.D., is considered to have been one of the most capable rulers Europe has known. His contemporary Harun-al-Rashid (died 809 A.D.) was the Caliph of the Muslim Empire. Both these distinguished rulers in the West and the East were great patrons of learning and reigned over vast empires. In Europe the scriptures were the final authority for everything and even philosophy and science had to be reconciled with Christian theology. So was the case with the Muslims; the Quran and Islamic teaching were the basis for everything.

During the reign of Harun-al-Hashid and his son a large number of richly endowed schools were opened, libraries were organized, and an observatory was set up. Learned men without distinction of religion were honoured and supported. It had become a fashion for rulers and wealthy nobles to become patrons of learning, to hold meetings in which subjects of science, philosophy and theology were freely discussed and to collect large numbers of books for the public libraries.

ISLAMIC GOLDEN AGE

Islamic Golden Age, or the Islamic Renaissance, is traditionally dated from the 8th century to the 13th century, but has been now extended to at least the 15th century by recent scholarship. During this period, artists, engineers, scholars, poets, philosophers, geographers and traders in the Islamic world contributed to agriculture, the arts, economics, industry, law literature, navigations, philosophy, sciences, sociology and technology, both by preserving earlier traditions and by adding inventions and innovations of their own.

According to Howard Turner, in *Science in Medieval Islam*, "Muslim Artists and scientists, princes and laborers together made a unique culture that has directly and indirectly influenced societies on every continent."

"Each great of the world," writes Ameer Ali in his momentous book, *The Spirit of Islam*, "has had its golden age. Athens had her Periclean era; Rome, her Augustan age; so, too, had the Islamic world its epoch of glory; and we may with justice look upon the period which elapsed from the accessions of Mansur to the death of Mu'tazid-B'illah, as an epoch of equal, if not of superior, greatness and magnificence." It was

in this period that every part of the globe was ransacked by the Caliph's agents who came back laden with new ideas and ideologies to the capital and enriched the public. Public libraries were established along with the schools and academies in every city. The great philosophers of the by-gone age were studied side by side with the Quran. The Arabs caught up the lessons of wisdom from the East and the West and turned from soldiers into scholars.

Every city in the Empire marveled in the cultivation of arts and sciences. From every part of the globe students flocked to Cordova, to Damascus, to Baghdad and to Cairo to listen to the words of Saracenic sages. Even persons like Gerbert, afterward Pope Sylvester II, acquired scholarships from Islamic teachers in Cordova (Spain).

IN EGYPT

Egypt, under the Fatimids (909-1171 A.D.), became the centre of an empire that included at its peak North Africa, Sicily, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, the Red Sea Coast of Africa, Yemen and Hijaz. Their trade and diplomatic ties extended all the way to China.

The reign of Fatimid Caliph Al-Aziz (975-996 A.D.) was also culturally significant. He and his grand Vazir Yaqub ibn Killis (979-991 A.D.) founded the Al-Azhar University in Cairo in 988 A.D. with dwellings built for a large number of professors and students. The Fatimid Caliph founded this academy on the pattern of the academy named *Bait-al-Hikmat* (House of Wisdom) established in Baghdad by the Abbasid Caliph Mamun. The academy consisted of a library containing more than 2,00,000 books, an observatory and a dwelling for students

with a medical college attached. Al-Azhar became the most important centre of learning in the Islamic world. Thus the rise of Cairo, under the Fatimid Caliphs, marked the culminating point of the interest and enthusiasm of the sovereigns under whose protection arts and sciences flourished.

IN SPAIN

So also in Spain we find that the same activity of mind was at work from the Pyrenees to the Straits: Cordova, Granada, Murcia and Toledo were the main centres of learning.

Moors, as the Spaniards call the Muslims, populated Spain for almost 800 years. It was their civilization that enlightened Europe and brought it out of the dark ages to usher in the renaissance. Many of their cultural and intellectual influences still live of as today.

It was Abdur Rahman I, a survivor of family of Umayyad Caliphs of the Arab Empire, who reached Spain in mid-700s. He became the first Caliph of Al-Andalus. This family ruled in Spain for over 300 years. In less than two centuries, the Moors turned Al-Andalus into a bastion of culture, commerce and beauty.

Irrigation systems imported from Syria and Arabia turned the dry plains of Iberian peninsula into an agricultural cornucopia. Olive and wheat were always grown there. The Arabs added pomegranates, oranges, lemons, cumins, coriander, bananas, palms, henna, saffron, sugarcane, cotton, rice, figs, grapes, peaches, apricots and rice.

"Every branch of science was seriously studied there, and medicine received more and greater additions by the discoveries

of the doctors and surgeons of Andalusia that it had gained during all the centuries it had elapsed..... Astronomy, geography, Chemistry, natural history, all were studied with ardour at Cordova; and as for the graces of literature there never was a time in Europe when poetry became so much the speech of everybody," So writes Lane-Poole of Cordova in *The Moors in Spain*.

The first observatory in Europe was built by the Arabs. Apart from this, a large general literature existed on the subjects of commerce, agriculture, handicrafts and manufacture. It were the Arabs who invented the mariner's compass voyaged around the globe in quest of knowledge or in pursuit of commerce.

IN INDIA

Muslims in the Indian subcontinent are known for their unique social stratifications based on tribes and descent from Arabs and include elements of local and Arabic tribal systems.

Islamic influence first came to be felt in the 7th century with the advent of Arab traders. Arab traders used to visit Malabar region, which was a link between them and the ports of South-East Asia to trade even before Islam had been established in Arabia (Elliot and Dowson and H.G. Rawlinson). The first Indian mosque was built in 629 A.D. at the behest of Cheraman Perumal, who is considered the first Indian Muslim in Kodungallur, in Kerala, by Malik Bin Deenar.

In Malabar, the Moplahs were the first community to convert to Islam because of their close connections with the Arab traders and merchants.

In the 8th century, the province of Sindh was conquered by Muhammad bin Qasim in 711-12 A.D. Then from the beginning of the 11th century Mahmud Ghaznavi conquered the Punjab in 1020 and conducted several raids deeper into modern day India. Thereafter Muslims ruled in India until 1857 – Turko-Afghans from 1020 to 1525 and Mughals from 1526 to 1857 for more than 800 years. In India, during this period, cross-fertilization of Hindu and Muslim cultures became a force to reckon with and released fresh creative energies of both these communities in all spheres of civilized life such as, administration, science, literature, art, architecture, music and learning with extremely laudable results.

LITERATURE

Arabic was embellished by thousands of stars such as al-Khwarizmi (died c. 844 A.D.), al-Farghani (Alfraganus of the Western writers, c. 860 A.D.), al-Kindi (died c. 873 A.D.), Avicenna (Bu Ali Sina, 980 – 1037 A.D.) and Ibn Khaldun (died 1406 A.D.), who adorned the literary firmament of Islam. Arabic had come to the civilized world and, towards the close of the fifteenth century, Islam contributed to a considerable extent to the European Renaissance. It was the advancing tide of Islam which dominated this greatest upheaval in art and learning the European world ever had in the course of its history.

The centre of intellectual life was transferred in the most flourishing period of Arab learning to a place which now seems remote and backward in civilization to Khurasan in eastern Persia, Khwarizm, Turkistan and Bactria. Al-Khwarizmi was a native of Khiva, al-Farghani of Transoxiana, al-Battani was of Persian origin so also al-Beiruni, al-Kindi was of pure Arab stock. Al-Farabi was a Turk by origin and Avicenna hailed from near Balkh. Al-Ghazali was from Tus in the east of Persia. Omar

Khayyam, who wrote his *Algebra* in Arabic, is now more famous for his *Rubaiyyat*, was a Persian poet. Several of these scholars wrote both in Arabic and Persian. As for Averroes (Ibn-i-Rushd), Arzachel (al-Zarkali) and Alpetragius (al-Biturji), they were Arabs of Spain.

These scholars, very different in origin, had common objectives of pursuit of knowledge in the given disciplines, classification of their writings, and placing them in an orderly manner.

INFLUENCE ON WORLD LITERATURE

Arabic literature, apart from the translation of the Holy Quran in the twelfth century, did not elicit much interest until the eighteenth century. The Arabic works, and many more in other eastern languages, fuelled fascination in Orientalism within Europe, and many Islamic texts in Arabic and Persian were translated which resulted in the enhancement of interest in Islamic literature.

The book One Thousand and One Night (Arabian Nights), a compilation of many earlier folk tales, took form in the tenth century and reached its final form in the fourteenth century. This was translated in the eighteenth century and has been quite influential in Europe. Books such as *Amir Arslan*, *Laila and Majnun*, Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* and similar other books inspired writing of many books on the same pattern in Europe.

Shakespeare referred to Iran as the "Land of Sophy". Some of Iran's best-beloved medieval poets were Sufis and their poetry is widely read from Morocco to Indonesia. Rumi in particular is renowned both as a poet and as the founder of the 'Maulavi', or Turkish 'Mevlevi', Order of Derveshes. Many texts in Persian mystic literature are highly regarded. Among these are *Kimiya-*

i-Sa'adat and *Asrar-al-Tawhid*, which elicit great interest from all.

SUFISM

Civilization typically comes to a grinding halt whenever the writ of a revealed religion runs supreme. For any civilization to blossom, there has to be certain intellectual and cultural space that is relatively free from dogma and hidebound traditions. In the early examples in Islam, especially during the reign of the Abbasids in Baghdad, there was an informal separation of religion and state, or *Din* and *Daula*, and Islamic civilization was able to make important gains, drawing inputs from a variety of eclectic source — both indigenous and external.

Sufism in Islam emerged as a protestant and liberalizing current, that became the primary vehicle for intellectual advance and the dissemination of culture in societies governed by Islamic sovereigns. If we view it in retrospect, this was essential in easing the transition from the earlier societies that existed prior to the victory of Islamic conquerors. Sufism provided a way to reconcile some of the religious doctrines of earlier cultural and religious systems. Sufi scholars went to great lengths in establishing a sense of continuity and evolution amongst the various revealed and other religions and became instrumental in limiting political tensions and in facilitating a modicum of social peace and harmony.

Sufism, which was essentially a product of Islam and which originated in Arabia, made a singular contribution in developing philosophical thoughts, intellectual pursuits and spiritual attainments in the Islam-dominated world spanning Asia, Africa and Europe in which Iranian mystics played a singular role.

In the finest of literature, there are elements that are of secular and universal significance which greatly influenced Persian, Indian, European and other literatures of the world.

MAHMUD OF GHAZNA

The dawn of the eleventh century saw a great change in the political condition of Central Asia. The rise of Mahmud of Ghazna, the great conqueror, commonly known as the "Kidnapper" of scholars and litterateurs, brought a vast empire under his sway. His court was adorned by men like Albeiruni (973-1048 A.D.) – philosopher, mathematician, traveler, historian and geographer; Ferdowsi (934-1020 A.D.) the prince of poets; Unsari (d.1088 A.D.) – the poet laureate; Asghadi; Farrukhi (d.1037 A.D.) and Daqiqi and hundreds of other intellectuals. Al-beiruni's mind was encyclopedic. His work on astronomy is a monument of learning and research. Under the successors of Mahmud, learning and the arts flourished immensely and with the same speed as they had under Mahmud himself.

From the middle of the Seventh century and upto the beginning of the Thirteenth century the development of Islam as an integral cultural complex is a unique fact of history. For the first century or so the world of Islam, spanning Europe, North Africa and Central Asia, presented a remarkable spectacle of political, social and cultural unity. Subsequently, even when it was politically divided, it maintained its social and cultural integrity, intellectual vigour and economic vitality. The decline set in from the middle of the Thirteenth century when Baghdad was sacked by the Mongol invaders.

No doubt, the successive Mongol invasions upon the Muslim world were a great blow and put an end, for the time being, to the intellectual development of Asia. Where ever the Mongols went misery and desolation followed. But when they were converted to Islam, a change came over them. From barbarians they became patrons of learning with the result that cities like Bokhara and Samarqand again rose to prominence. Again there was an awakening in the domains of arts and sciences. The Muslims resumed their work with new spirit.

CONTRIBUTION OF ISLAM IN OTHER BRANCHES OF KNOWLEDGE

I will now give a brief account of the contribution made by Muslims in various other branches of knowledge. It was not only astronomy which formed the Muslims' chief interest but they also made remarkable progress in algebra, geometry and arithmetic. Their progress in mathematical geography was no less great. The works of Ibn Hauqal of Makrizi, Al-Istakhari, Masudi, Muqadisi and Albeiruni show how much the Muslims achieved in this domain and disseminated to the rest of the world.

CHEMISTRY

Chemistry as a science is indisputably the invention of the Muslims and Abu Musa Jabir Ibn-i-Hayyan of Kufa (Geber of Christian writers), a close associate of the family of Vazir of Harun-al-Rashid, who was declared "The most Famous Arabian Prince and Philosopher" by Richard Russell in 1678 A.D., is truly regarded as "Father of Modern Chemistry." Jabir's influence can be traced throughout the whole historic course of

European chemistry. Rhazes' (Al-Razi, C 865-925 A.D.) important alchemical work has been *Book of the Alchemy* which gives clear description of chemical processes and apparatus.

PHYSICS

In physics, al-Kindi (died c.974 A.D.) and al-Farabi (died c. 951 A.D.) are most frequently referred scholars to whom are ascribed hundreds of works and who were generally acknowledged as "Philosophers of the Arabs." No less than 265 works are ascribed to al-Kindi. His *Optics*, presented in Latin translation, influenced western men of science. He also wrote on iron and steel for weapons.

MEDICAL SCIENCE

Medical science was also much developed by the Muslims. Hunayan Ibn-i-Ishaq (809-877 A.D.), a particularly gifted philosopher and physician of wide erudition, wrote many books on medicine. His book *Ten Treatises on the Eye*, is the earliest systematic text book of ophthalmology. The names of Arab physicians such as Rhazes (Al-Razi c 865-925 A.D.), a Persian Muslim born at Ray near modern Tehran and a disciple of Ibn-Ishaq, who was well acquainted with Greek, Persian and Indian medicine, wrote *al-Hawi*, that is, "Comprehensive Book" on medical knowledge. He also wrote many other books but the most celebrated of all his works is that *On Small-pox and Measles*; Haly Abbas (Ali Ibn Abbas, died 944 A.D.) was the composer of the compact medical encyclopaedia, *The Whole Medical Art*; Abulcasis (died c 1013 A.D.) court physician in Cordova, Spain, is known for writing a treatise on surgery; Avicenna (Bu Ali Sina, 980-1037 A.D.) wrote his gigantic 'Canon of Medicine' (*al-Qanun fit-Tibb*), which is a

masterpiece; Avenzoar (Ibn Zuhr, died c 1162 A.D.) at Saville, Spain) an aristocratic court physician, who displayed disdain for surgery; Averroes (Ibn Rushd, died in Morocco in 1198 A.D.) disciple and friend of Avenzoar, wrote some sixteen medical works one of which is 'General Rules of Medicine' (*Kulliyat fit-Tibb*) which became very popular, are among the most brilliant and most distinguished.

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Islamic culture has been distinguished by literary rather than mechanical or scientific achievements. But Muslims have contributed to world civilization by giving abundant proof of their highest skill in the domains of music, art and architecture.

ISLAMIC ART

The term Islamic art encompasses the visual arts produced from the 7th century onwards. It includes calligraphy, painting, ceramics, pile carpet and inlaid work on stone and metal. Islamic art has been mainly abstract and decorative, portraying geometric, floral, Arabesque, and calligraphic designs. Since human figure could not be represented by imagery, geometric patterns were used. Special type of finesse was developed to depict this art.

CERAMICS

From the eighth to eighteenth centuries, the use of glazed ceramics was prevalent in Islamic art, usually assuming the form of elaborate pottery. Tin-opacified glazing was one of the earliest new technologies developed by the Islamic potters. The

first opaque glazes can be found as blue-painted ware in Basra in the 8th century. Soon pottery production developed in Syria and centres like Damascus, Tabriz, Kashan came into being. Besides Islamic designs, the medieval Islamic world also had pottery with animal imagery. Examples of which are found in Persian and Egyptian pottery.

PILE CARPET

No Islamic artistic concept has become better known than the pile carpet, more commonly referred to as the Oriental Carpet. Their versatility is utilized in everyday life, from floor coverings to architectural enrichment, from cushions to bolsters of all shapes and sizes, and to religious objects such as prayer rug. Carpet weaving is a rich and deeply embedded tradition in Islamic societies and the practice is seen in cities as well as rural communities and nomadic encampments.

OTHER ARTS

Among other forms of art, work in stone, metal, wood and ivory was often developed to a high degree of technical accomplishment and the *objets d'art* made out of these elements especially in India, were highly valued throughout the world.

MUSIC

The development of Islamic music, particularly between the tenth and the eighteenth centuries, was a valuable contribution to world culture. It was the popular saying that "music accompanied the Arab from the cradle to the grave,

from the lullaby to the elegy". Every moment of an Arab's life seems to have had its particular music – joy and sorrow, work and play, battle-throng and religious exercise. Vocal music has always been keenly appreciated by the Muslims than purely instrumental music. Their ardent taste for poetry determined this to some extent. That the Muslims contributed to the practical art of music in the East there is ample evidence in the technical nomenclature from Samarkand to the Atlantic. It influenced both the East and West and traces of its influence are apparent in European music through Spain and South Africa, and in Indian through Iran and Central Asia.

PAINTING AND CALLIGRAPHY

Though Muslims did not make any noteworthy progress in the field of painting they were able to influence to some extent art of painting in the west. Muhammadan decorative motifs from Oriental fabrics came to be introduced into details of landscape in painting in cities which had highly developed esthetic painting schools and were also centers of commercial communication such as Genoa, Pisa and Venice. The Muslims developed calligraphy to a great extent. Most of the painters were also good calligraphists. The first among the leading artists and painters was Kamal-ud-din Behzad, commonly known as "the Raphael of the East." He was well known for his delicacy of line, brilliancy and harmony of colours. He was followed by a galaxy of artists such as Mir Sayed Ali Tabrizi, Ustad Abdul Samad, Raza Abbasi, Muhammad Zaman, Nadir ul-Zaman and Ustad Mansur. Calligraphy was considered to be a more respectable art because of the Prophet's prohibition of graven images and painting and hence calligraphists enjoyed greater reputation and honour than painters and engravers. Illumination of both sacred and secular texts was another form of art highly developed by the Muslims.

ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE

It encompasses a wide range of both secular and religious styles from the advent of Islam till the present day, influencing the design and construction of buildings and structures in Islamic culture. The principal Islamic architectural designs are: the Mosque, the Tomb the Palace and the Fort. It is from these main types of structures that buildings of lesser importance such as public baths, fountains, and domestic architecture are derived. Islamic architecture started from Arabia, developed in Mesopotamia, Iran, Spain and Central Asia and reached its zenith of artistic beauty in India. During the last eight hundred years, Muslims, in India particularly, showed their greatest skill and ability in constructing domes and arches, forts and bulwarks, mosques and shrines, and palaces and mausoleums. Equally notable is the fact that all public and private buildings of any pretensions had a garden attached to them, a practice which was unknown before the advent of Muslim rule in India.

Under the Mughals, especially under Shah Jahan, the golden era of architecture was attained and it found expression in style of architecture of exceptional splendour which reached the highest degree of perfection. Shah Jahan augmented sumptuous building schemes culminating in the construction of the world renowned Taj Mahal. This mausoleum in made of white marble and is hailed as the 'Wonder of the World'. The monument is a work of the taste akin to the exquisite taste of the Safawids of Iran. According to M. Grousset, a French savant, the Taj Mahal is "the soul of Iran incarnate in the body of India".

ROLE OF WOMEN

Not only this. The learning of women proceeded on parallel lines with that of men. Women had their own institutions of learning and their contribution to this magnificent culture

was no less important than the men's. From early times women occupied an exalted position.

In earlier history of Islam, female religious scholars were relatively common. Orientalist Ignass Goldziher earlier estimated that 15 per cent of medieval *hadis* scholars were women. After 1500's, however, female scholars became fewer.

Historical Muslim female leaders include Razia Sultana, the first Muslim ruler, who ruled very ably Sultanate of Delhi from 1236 to 1240, and followed by Shayarat ad-Durr, who ruled Egypt from 1250 to 1257.

Right from the beginning the names of some of the women are very prominent such as Khadija bint Khuwaylid, wife of the Prophet; Fatima, the poetess daughter of the Prophet; Zubaida, the wife of Harun, who was responsible for establishing hospitals for the sick and refuge for homeless orphans; Rukayya popularly known as Sakina, the daughter of Husain and the granddaughter of Imam Ali, was the most brilliant and accomplished woman of her ago; Buran (Pretty), wife of Caliph Mamun, was a general benefactor; Nur Jahan, wife of Emperor Jahangir, for her many acts of munificence and charity for the orphans, destitute women and other needy people of Lahore; Zebunnisa, the talented and poetess daughter of Aurangzeb; and an innumerable host of other women.

According to Professor William Montgomery Watt: "Islam improved the status of women by instituting rights of property ownership, inheritance, education and divorce."

APPRAISAL

This is a brief sketch of the glorious cultural achievements of Muslims and their contribution to world civilization in the medieval age. Then commenced a period in which Muslim mind suffered a cultural and intellectual setback which caused cultural stagnation. The first jolt to cultural activities of the Muslims

was given by the Mongols in the thirteenth century when Baghdad was sacked. But the Islamic world soon recovered from it when the barbarian Mongols got converted to Islam and the neo-converts became enthusiastic patrons of arts and letters. Thereafter, immobility of thought started in the wake of conquest and occupation of Constantinople by the Osmanli Turks in the fifteenth century. By the fall of Byzantium, the Greek scholars with their rich heritage of art and culture, the learning of wisdom of ancient Greeks, migrated to Western Europe. The West was deeply stirred by a new cultural and intellectual spirit which resulted in Renaissance in the West and made the European mind independent of Islamic influence that had dominated it throughout the medieval ages and placed Western Europe on a course of intellectual and material progress, especially in the field of science and technological developments taking place in the West, the Muslim world was left far behind. Since the Islamic world lost contact with the rapidly developing West, it could not share in the vast amount of scientific knowledge and the rich treasures of technological skill which the west acquired during the course of centuries after Renaissance. As a consequence, cultural immobility set in which gave way to narrow-mindedness, obscurantism and mental degeneration which characterized the Muslim countries from the sixteenth century to the early nineteenth century, except, perhaps, in India where again cross-fertilization of Hindu and Muslim cultures acquired a remarkable synthesis and released fresh creative energies of both these communities in all spheres of civilized life such as engineering, literature, art, architecture, music, fine arts and learning with extremely appreciable results. Even in India towards the end of the eighteenth century A.D., owing to utter political chaos and anarchy, mental degeneration and decline in cultural activities set in which affected the social and moral spheres of all Indians in general and Indian Muslims in particular.

In conclusion, I would say that to a thoughtful person and an ardent student of Islamic history and culture, it will be clear that Islamic culture is a dynamic force which has moved through time and space, assimilating the cultures it came in contact with, stamping them with its own genius and then taking over a new shape as it kept on moving ahead and, in the process, made an extraordinary contribution to world's civilization, the benefit of which the mankind is reaping even today.

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APPENDIX - IV

**PERSIAN LITERATURE IN IRAN IN
HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

Persian Literature in Iran in Historical Perspective
Based on the Justice K.M. Yusuf Memorial
Lecture

Delivered by the author at the Iran Society,
Kolkata

on December 9, 2012

INTRODUCTION

Persian literature is a jewel in the crown of Persian culture. The historical perspective of its rise, growth and development makes fascinating study.

Iran was conquered by the Arabs in the middle of the 7th century A.D. It was from 635 A.D. that the Arabs commenced subjugation of the Iranian Empire of the Sasanians. First they captured Damascus and, in the following year, inflicted a crushing defeat on the Iranians at Qudisiya. By 642 A.D. almost the entire Iranian Empire was annexed by them.(1)

After the conquest of Iran by the Arabs the language of Iran underwent profound changes. Among other things, the modulations of voice of Iranian speech were gradually changed and the vocabulary was greatly enriched by taking in many thousands of loan-words from Arabic, the language of the conquerors. But hardly any literary activity, or literary output, in Pahlavi or Persian worth the name, took place as the Iranians also started writing in Arabic. However, with the decline of Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad in the 9th century A.D., independent dynasties arose in different provinces which rejuvenated interest in *Zaban-i-Farsi*, or language of Iran, once again. It was initially in the court of Tahirids (820-872 A.D.)

and then in the court of Saffarid Yaqub-bin-Laith of Khurasar, *circa* 870, that Iran after almost two centuries was again able to use her mother-tongue which had undergone a profound change and appeared to be semi-Arabicized.

Far exceeding the geographical boundaries of the Iranian plateau in its dominance, it provided a literary model for the eastern half of the Abbasid Caliphate. This penetration was accelerated and became wide-spread after 1258 when Mongols sacked Baghdad and put an end to the long-lived Abbasid Caliphate; (2) although in the western half of the Caliphate Arabic continued to dominate.

When Neo-Persian emerged as a literary medium, it turned out to be far superior to the Semetic speech. Subsequently, generations of shaping and then polishing made it into one of the sweetest, most melodious languages of the East. (3) It was also made a vehicle of one of the greatest literatures of mankind.

In spite of several vicissitudes, vagaries of nature, much suffering, and much disappointments, especially during the regimes of the Mongols, the Taimurids and other Turkish rulers, the Iranian character developed an admirable serenity and detachment from material things. As a result, the poets, the writers and the artists remained content to devote considerable time and great patience in moulding exquisitely their language, arts and crafts, and Persian poetry. Persian poetry, during all these centuries, is admittedly far superior in all respects to the prose, but it must be said the prose in no way can be regarded lightly. Slower to mature than verse, Persian prose started in a humble way and, in due course of time, the prose writers also composed several works in honest, simple and straight-forward manner.

In developing Persian prose in the earlier stages historiographers also played an important role. There came a time when the Iranian custom of recording great events for the king and the ruling elite received much attention. In the beginning, history was recorded in simple and forthright manner. It was later on, especially during the Mongol regime, and subsequently, that history writing became bombastic, tortuous and inflated to satisfy the whims of some of the rulers of the Mongol and Taimurid dynasties.

From the beginning of the nineteenth century it can be said that with the exposure to Western literature the horizon of literary activities in Iran, both in poetry and prose, was broadened and a kind of renaissance of the Persian language in all its aspects took place. In this journalism played an important role. There was an awakening, and special attention was given to bring it in line with the developments taking place in other countries, especially in the West, and attempts were made with renewed vigour to polish the language to make it compatible to the modern times, both in thought and speech.

In making the analysis of historical developments and the value of Persian literature, over the centuries, even to the modern times, we can confidently say that in its spirit is of the enduring value and in her poetry and prose writings the soul of Iran lives. The Iranians have known life and have loved life and have also lived it with dignity, with its pains and pleasures, in victories and in defeats, and this is amply reflected in Persian literature which is the enduring gift they have bestowed on rest of the arankind.

PERSIAN POETRY

Poetry in Persian literature, right from the beginning, is given the pride of place. It was during the period spanning the ninth and the fifteenth centuries that Iran produced its classical poets and writers in Persian who have not only enriched the Persian language and literature but have also left an indelible impress of their wide-spread influence on the literatures of the world. All this development took place, surprisingly, under the patronage of non-Iranian rulers who were vanquished by the superior Iranian culture and had adopted Iranian manners, customs, etiquettes and even the language. First it were the Seljuk Turks, followed by the Il-khan Mongols and then the Taimurids. In an overview of classical Persian poetry, which in itself is a daunting task given the range and abundance of material available and the need for brevity, our approach is to discuss, briefly, this literature over ten centuries, particularly in respect of early formation and origin of different poetic forms and tracing through succeeding generations and centuries.

Persian poetry of the classical period from the ninth to the fifteenth centuries can be divided into the following four ages, namely –

- i) the age of the epics (850 to 1025 A.D.) ;
- ii) the age of the romantic and eulogistic poetry (1025 to 1200 A.D.) ;
- iii) the age of mystic and didactic poetry (1200 to 1300 A.D.) ; and
- iv) the age of lyric-mystic poetry (1300 to 1500 A.D.)

THE AGE OF THE EPICS-850 to 1025 A.D.

In the age of the epics, Rudaki (d.954) is generally considered to be the father of classical Persian literature. He was among the first poets to have attained fair mastery over important forms of poetic literature, though he was preceded by poets of mediocre abilities. His poetic rendition was enormous, though only a small portion survives. He was congenitally blind and lived in the reign of Nasr bin-Ahmed of the Samanid dynasty. (4) He exercised a great influence on the subsequent Persian poetry. In this age, Rudaki was followed by the great Ferdowsi (934-1020) who lived under the patronage of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni for twelve long years and completed his world famous epic, the *Shahnameh*. It is not only the work of history but also the cultural and literary treasure of Iran. Ferdowsi's verse in the epic is an excellent blend of simplicity, sonority and sublimity. (5) He not only "revivified past traditions but also put new life and vigour into the new dawn of Persian literature." (6) It occupies an honoured place among the world epics. From Ferdowsi's time Persian poetry advanced rapidly.

THE AGE OF THE ROMANTIC POETRY – 1025 to 1200 A.D.

In the age of romantic and eulogistic poetry, the favourite themes of literature were – separation from the beloved, the cruelty of fate, and the evanescence of life, on the one hand, and composition of the eulogistic verse, or court poetry, on the other. Omar Khayyam (1044-1123), whose fame rests on the authorship of a number of Ruba'is, does not rank high in Persian literature, although he was an eminent astronomer and mathematician. He was providentially lucky in having the English poet Edward Fitzgerald as a translator of his Ruba'is that he has been immortalized. Anwari (d.1200 A.D.), a

panegyrist, excelled in eulogistic verse, or court-poetry. He was a talented poet who wasted his talent in verses of flattery and exaggeration even at the cost of truth, realism and sincerity. His contemporary Khakani, though endowed with good poetic talent, also wrote obscure, artificial and pedantic poetry.

In this romantic age, Nizami Ganjavi (1140-1203) stands out tall. He was a scholarly and saintly personage and his poetry is known for mature thought, deep meditation, and lofty imagination. He composed five important poems, namely, "*Makhzan-al-Assrar*," "*Khusrow wa Shirin*", "*Sikandernameli*", "*Haft Paiker*", and "*Laila wa Majnun*". His poetry was the trend-setter and Persian poets who followed him felt proud to emulate him. (7)

THE AGE OF MYSTIC AND DIDACTIC POETRY – 1200 to 1300 A.D.

Thereafter followed the age of mystic and didactic poetry (1200-1300). The true greatness and charm of Persian literature is to be seen in the mystic, or Sufistic poetry. The first and foremost is Hakim Sanai (d.1131) who composed Sufistic verse in the poetic form known as '*Mesnavi*'. He was followed by the mystic poet Fariduddin Attar (1145-1220) whose famous work "*Mantiq ut-Tair*" (Logic of Birds) is one of the great poems of Sufism. (8) After this we come to the doyen of Sufi poets: Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi (1207-1273). Rumi was a true Sufi and had experienced many spiritual visions and was transported into ecstasy. His preceptor was Shams-i-Tabriz, a wandering dervish. His monumental work in Persian is known as '*Mesnavi*' composed of over twenty six thousand verses and is divided into six books. *Mesnavi* has been acclaimed as the complete scripture of Sufism and is hailed as the Quran

composed in the *Zaban-i-Pahlavi*, (9) or the language of Iran. Of all the Persian writers the most famous and well known is Sheikh Sa'di who is believed to have lived a long life from 1184 to 1291. He was born at Shiraz and studied in the famous Nizamiyah University of Baghdad. His spiritual preceptor was the learned Shahabuddin Suhradwarly. There is no literate person in Iran, or for that matter anywhere else in the world knowing Persian, who has not read Sa'di's '*Gulistan*' and '*Bostan*'. He is considered to be the foremost representative of didactic poetry and the greatest of Iranian moral teachers. His style of poetry is easy, chaste and charming and for this reason no Persian poet is so profusely quoted. (10) Didactic literature is also represented by another great scholar Nasiruddin Tusi (1200-1274). He had a fine synthetic brain and was a great philosopher, astronomer and mathematician. Because of his association with the murderers known as the "Assassins" and treachery to the last Abbasid Caliph and siding with the Mongols in the siege of Baghdad, his reputation suffered enormously and earned him the epithet of "the wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind." (11)

THE AGE OF THE LYRIC-MYSTIC POETRY – 1300 to 1500 A.D.

Then followed the age of lyric-mystic poetry (1300-1500) which can also be regarded as the culmination of lyric poetry in Iran. Khwaja Shamsuddin Muhammad Hafiz (d.1390) who lived at Shiraz and is acknowledged to be the greatest lyricist in Persian. According to all lovers of Persian literature the inspiration, grace, beauty and sweetness of Persian lyrical poetry attained its highest summit in Hafiz and "in the rose garden of Persian literature there is no nightingale more melodious than

Hafiz." (12) Hafiz was not a Sufi but his poetry was favoured by the Sufis. In his poetic compositions he has intense restlessness caused by it more than on the perfection of love and the raptures of union. The relations of Hafiz with India and the association of the Indian people with Hafiz, is a bilateral affair. He was invited by Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam, king of Bengal but he respectfully declined the invitation and sent his famous composition in verse lauding the poets of India for their love of Persian lyrics. (13) The last great poet of the classical period of Iran was Jami (1414 – 1492). The most famous work of Jami is "*Baharistan*" (Abode of Spring) and was written following the example set by Sheikh Sa'di's "*Gulistan*". It is in prose but very lavishly sprinkled with poetry and contains information about the Sufis and other poets. Among his poetic works is "*Salman wa Absal*", an allegorical poem where the soul falls in love with the body. The body dies and plunges the soul in grief. By the guidance of its spiritual preceptor the soul progresses from this earthly love to Love Divine. (14)

POETRY UNDER THE SAFAWIDS – 1501 to 1736

The Safawid regime from 1502-1736 was not very fertile in great poets. One of the reasons was that non-Shias and Sufis found themselves debarred from the royal favour. Only that poetry which eulogized the Imams was appreciated. Consequently, many well-known Persian poets looked for greener pastures and a number of them emigrated to India and sought patronage of the liberal Mughals and the provincial courts. The only exceptions were: Hatifi (d.1520), a nephew of the famous Jami, mostly wrote romantic poetry; Mohtsham Kashi wrote, in the sixteenth century, elegant verses on the martyrdom of Imam Hussain; and Saib Tabrizi composed good

verses, in the seventeenth century, and was honoured with the title of '*Malek al-Sho'ara*', king of poets. Famous among those poets who emigrated to India and settled here were: Ghazali Mashhadi who first came to the Deccan and then to Agra where Mughal emperor Akbar appointed him the first poet laureate; Sayyed Jamaluddin Urfi, who came from Shiraz and wrote odes and *qasidas* of high quality; Muhammad Husain Naziri, whose poetic style was simple and sweet, first came to Agra and, later on, settled at Ahmedabad; and Zahuri, who came from Khurasan and became the poet-laureate of Burhan Nizam Shah at Ahmadnagar. (15)

APPRAISAL OF CLASSICAL PERSIAN POETRY

The historical evolution of classical Persian poetry was a gradual progress. Its forms and themes were firmly established in its nascent stages, and the subsequent improvisations and drawing on philosophic and religious thoughts current at the time. Poetry in the classic period was patronized by the royal courts. Even when the patronage became more diffused, it retained much of its earlier courtly traits.

The West became acquainted with classical Persian poetry through translations in different languages of its lyrics, primarily mystical lyrics. The mystical lyrics became extremely popular in the West in the nineteenth-century that, besides greatly influencing the literati and different literatures, classical Persian poetry became synonymous with Persian Literature.

MODERN PERSIAN POETRY

Modern Persian poetry from the beginning of the nineteenth century started by the appearance of Qa'ani (d.1854)

on the poetic horizon of Iran, although he was preceded by poets like Sahab (d.1807) of Isfahan, Saba (d.1822) of Kashan, Mirza Abul Qasim Qaim-maqam (put to death in 1835) and Wisal (d.1846) of Shiraz. Qa'ani was born at Shiraz and is considered to be the greatest Persian poet of the nineteenth century. He is one of the most melodious of all Persian poets and had an astonishing command over various forms of poetic rendition. He has composed poetry in all kinds of metres and stanzas, long or short. The variety initiated by him has continued in contemporary literature. The melody and sweetness of his poetry is unique and baffles description. Hardly any other poet in Persian literature can be found to possess such a mastery of words. Though given to fawning and flattery, he possessed remarkable poetic genius (16). Qa'ani's close associate was Furughi (d.1858) who seemed to have preferred lyrics and composed his *ghazals* in the Sufistic vein. Another contemporary poet of Qa'ani was Yagham of Jandaq who is mainly known for his aggressive and obscene verses, a few odes and some elegies.

In the late nineteenth century, with the rise of social awareness for political and social change in Iran, Persian poetry continued its role as before, but its form, subject matter, and content were challenged by changing times.

The modern poets in Iran came to view classical Persian poetry as a means of entertainment only. They wanted to model modern Persian poetry to commensurate with socio-political movements which were taking shape in Iran. In order to change the old established orders of Persian poetry, western literature in general, and French literature in particular, provided the inspiration.

The period between 1891 and 1926 was dominated by a revolutionary climate. The Revolution of 1906-10 in Iran produced a new school of poets most eminent among them were: Dehkhuda of Qazwin, Arif of Qazwin, Sayyed Ashraf of Gilan, Bahar of Khurasan who, later on, became the poet-laureate, and Iraj Mirza, who was of princely descent and excelled in realism. A number of attempts were made by these poets to introduce freedom and advancement in Iranian art and literature but none could create the necessary transformation except their playing with old rhythms, transposition of rhymes, and giving identity to new expressions. Persian poetry, by and large, remained classical in nature.

The 1940s and 1950s witnessed the blossoming of a new or modernist Persian verse. (17) Ali Esfendiari or Nima Youshij (1896-1960), as he is popularly known, carried out experiments and achievements with untraditional verse forms. He was responsible for starting a new movement in Persian which has come to be known as "*She'r-i-Nau*" or New Poetry, or sometimes also called "*She'r-i-Nimai*" or Nimaic Poetry. Nima freed Persian poetry of the ruling power of prosody over subject matter.

Nima's movement attracted the attention of Ahmed Shamalou (1925-2000) who took up the cause of Nima Youshij with great assiduity and abandoned rhythm and rhyme but maintained the natural music of the Persian language by using soft and harmonious words. Here mention may also be made of another poet of this genre: Sohrab Sepehri (1928-1980) who is generally regarded as a modern artist. His free verse poems are distinguished by abstract symbolism and mysticism synthesizing Sufism, Zen Buddhism and Zoroastrianism." (18)

Modernism in Persian poetry has remained in the role of an *avant garde* movement in which besides many poets, a good number of poetesses have also made great contributions. The first modern Iranian poetess was a Bahai lady by the name of Fatimah Baraghani (1817-1852), born in Qazwin, generally known as Tahira (The Pure One) or Qurratul Aiyn (Solace of the Eyes), who flourished in the middle of the nineteenth century.(19) Her learning and eloquence were admirable, and so too were her sincerity and zeal for the Bahai faith which she had embraced. She is known for writing eloquent and ecstatic poems in magnificent diction and charming rhythm for love of God, critical of the traditional clergy, and in support of emancipation of women. Among other modern poetesses of the twentieth century the names of Parwin Etessami, Forough Farrukhkhzad, Simin Behbahani, Mana Aghaee and Ziba Karbasi, among others, stand out. (20)

APPRAISAL OF MODERN PERSIAN POETRY

One remarkable thing which strikes out among all the modern poets of Iran is that they care for their language and try to banish Arabic words as far as possible and are keen on the purity of their language and try to compose their verses unadulterated with Arabic words, terms and terminology. The basic tenets of modernist poetics are also to treat the poem as an object and to emphasize sincerity, intelligence, and the poetic ability to look clearly at the world.

Having acquired knowledge of western literature, the vision of modern Persian poets has broadened and as socially conscious intellectuals their poetry has become overwhelmingly absorbed in sociological content, individual and social ethics, patriotism and humanism.

PERSIAN PROSE

After the Arab conquest of Iran in the middle of the seventh century A.D., as already pointed out, there was a hiatus in Persian literary activities. When neo-Persian emerged in the ninth century A.D., Persian prose started in a humble way. According to E.G. Browne, in *A Literary History of Persia* (in 4 Volumes), Persian writers of prose classify their writings into three categories: 'Ari', plain, naked or unadorned; 'Musajja', or cadenced; and 'Muqaffa', or rhymed. In simple terms, we may divide them into natural and artificial. Sometimes in Persian prose, particularly in 'Muqaffa', or rhymed, there is so much poetry as prose that it becomes hard to ascertain whether we are reading prose or poetry.

Slower to mature than Persian poetry, the prose writers started composing several works in honest, simple and straight-forward way. Although Persian poetry has enjoyed relative continuity for more than a thousand years, Persian prose literature has undergone many changes. In order to understand various trends in Persian prose, from the ninth to the eighteenth centuries, it is necessary to look briefly on the historical developments which brought about different trends in Persian prose in Iran. Broadly, in classical Persian prose there are four phases in its developments, such as,

1. the Tahirid-Saffarid-Samanid period (A.D. 820-998)- characterized by simple, straight-forward, honest and laconic prose very close to Persian spoken by the educated class of today;
2. the Ghazanavid and Seljuq period (A.D. 998-1220) – when, continuing the earlier trend, increasing use of Arabic forms and terminology made Persian prose highly decorative;

3. the Mongol and Taimurid period (A.D. 1220-1500) – when the writing of history reached its zenith while Persian prose literature in general became ornamental and bombastic; and
4. the Safawid period (A.D. 1501-1722) – when over-ornamented Arabicized composition in prose prevailed.

Now we will discuss these epochs in greater detail.

1. TAHIRID – SAFFARID-SAMANID PERIOD (A.D. 820-998)

During the early stages of this period the language of Iran remained pre-Islamic for some time but because of large-scale of conversions of Iranians to Islam and adoption of Arabic script, Arabic form and terminology became extremely popular which dominated the written medium. With the rise of the semi-independent dynasties of Iranian origin in Eastern Iran and Khurasan, such as, Tahirids (820-872 A.D.), Saffarids (860-903 A.D.), and Samanids (874-998 A.D.), the style of prose became extremely simple, straight forward and objective. Sentences were short and precise and except for official and religious terms contained as few Arabic words as possible. (21) The authors used words and expression which could be easily understood by their contemporaries. (22)

An interesting incident is related in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol.4 pp.129-30 (edited by R.N. Frye) and taken from *Tarikh-i-Sistan* that Yaqub bin Laith as-Saffar, after his conquest of Herat and Pushang from the Tahirids, had poets attached to him who eulogized him in Arabic verses. Yaqub could not

understand these and asked the Secretary of his chancery, Muhammad b. Vasif, "Why must something be recited that I can't understand ? So Muhammad b. Vasif composed some verses in Persian. Yaqub in his court encouraged neo-Persian literature. "In this fashion the Saffarids were the catalytic agents in the birth of a specifically Irano-Islamic culture and feeling." (p.130)

The first Persian historian was Tabari (838-922 A.D.) who wrote a universal history in Arabic which work was translated into Persian in 970 by Balami. Balami's translation is, perhaps, the oldest extant book of Persian prose literature (23) and manifests the trend then prevalent.

It is important to note that the encouragement which Persian prose and poetry in their nascent stage of development received under these dynasties in the eastern part of Abbasid Caliphate was of remarkable significance in view of the fact that in Iranian plateau where the Buwayids belonging to Shi'ite sect, who ruled from 945 A.D. to 1055 A.D., were still actively promoting Arabic.

2. THE GHAZNAVID AND SELJUQ PERIOD - A.D. 998-1220

This particular era, which covers over two hundred years, produced some of the most important classical prose texts ever written in Persian. Persian language was encouraged in administration, scientific and mystic (Sufi) writings of a religious and speculative nature; literary and historical works written in this period established Persian as a great medium of fine prose. *Kashful Mahjub* (Unveiling of the Veiled), written by Sheikh Ali bin Usman Hujwiri (d.1077), in Lahore under

the Ghaznavids, was the first ever treatise in Persian written on Sufism.

Gradually but perceptibly Arabic words, terms and terminology started creeping in Persian and writers of prose were influenced by Arabic as the Ghaznavids, and some of the Seljuqs, were keen to establish respectable ties with Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad. In the process, early simplicity of expression began to lose its grip. Sentences grew in length; parables, quotations, anecdotes, and elaborate narrations, and a new terminology of Perso-Arabic words came to be coined which made the language flexible. (24)

The resourcefulness of Arabic elements in Persian writings of Ibn-i-Sina (Avicenna) and Al-Beiruni, and the *Siasatnameh* by Nizam ul-Mulk and *Qabusnameh* by Unsur al-Ma'ali Kaikaus of the eleventh century A.D. are shown to good effect. These works also demonstrate that Arabic was addition to an already rich stock. The Arabic element in Nizami Aruzi Samarqandi's *Chahar Maqala* of the twelfth century is a masterpiece in clarity and pleasantness to read. This book deals with four important functionaries at court: the secretary, the poet, the doctor, and the astrologer. Similarly, Arabic element when manipulated by a great master like Sheikh Sa'di (d.1291) is really an adornment of great beauty and charm.

Towards the end of this era, Persian prose began to deteriorate because of imitation of cadenced style of Arab authors and also because it came in the hands of less gifted authors.

3. THE MONGOL AND TAIMURID PERIOD - A.D. 1220-1500

With sack of Baghdad by Halaghu Khan in 1258, the Arabic influence on Persian authors was much reduced and

Persian came to be free from Arabic dominance. This is best exemplified in *Tarikh-i-Vasif* (Vasif's History) which is full of vain epithets, exuberant rhetoric, bombastic style which goes to the extreme of incomprehensibility, much in vogue during the regime of the Il-Khans vis-a-vis *Tarikh-i-Jahan Kusha* (Annals of the World Conqueror), on the Mongol conqueror Chenghiz Khan, by a contemporary historian of Vasif, Ata Malek Juwaini. Now Juwaini's work is comparatively free from all that Vasif's work suffered. Hamdullah Mustaufi wrote *Zafarnameh* (Book of Victory) which is in verse and narrates history from the origin of Islam until 1330 A.D. and may be regarded as the continuation of Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*. (25) As a contrast to all this, Persian prose in Sa'di's *Gulistan* (Flower Garden) is considered perfect in form and superb in its clarity of expression. (26) However, Mongol period is notable for the number of histories produced as the Il-Khans were keen to record their campaigns and achievements. Historiography was immensely developed. An important achievement was the *Jami ut-Tawarikh* (The Collection of Chronicles) written by Rashid ud-Din, who became a Vazier of Il-Khans in 1298. This is a general history not only of Islam but also of other civilizations known to the author.

"Under the Taimurids", writes Kamshad, "when narrow-mindedness, lack of taste, and a sharp decline in public morality prevailed throughout the country, research and scholarly traditions of the past were greatly neglected. Most of the prose works of this time are written in plain, artificial, and unvaried language, which has neither the ease, simplicity and precision of the early writings nor style of prose of the elegance of later styles." (27) Under the Taimurids the verbose and pedantic style of prose of the Mongol era was encouraged.

4. THE SAFAWID PERIOD - A.D. 1501-1796

From 1501 A.D. the history of Iran took a new turn that had great consequences both politically and culturally. Safawids established a unified state in Iran and also introduced the beliefs of the Athna Ashariyya sect of Shi'ite Islam as a national religion. After the introduction of Shiaism in Iran, writers and poets there turned their attention to sectarian topics. The central subject was the martyrdom of the twelve Imams, in particular the death of the third Imam Husain ibn-i-Ali, who became a martyr in 680 A.D. in the battle of Karbala.

As a consequence of this, the Safawid regime was not very fertile in great poets: one of the reasons was that non-Shias and Sufis found themselves debarred from the royal favour which proved detrimental both to the spread of Sufism and the progress of Persian poetry. (28) Though poetry languished, prose somewhat prospered during this period but was mainly confined to theology and written primarily from the Shia point of view. The most famous name in this genre is that of Mulla Sadruddin Shirazi, commonly known as Mulla Sadra. He is reputed to be the greatest philosophic brain of his time. (29) The two most celebrated works of Mulla Sadra are *Asfar-i-Arba'a* (Four Books) and *Shawahidur Rububiyya* (Evidence of Divinity).

Another prose writer of the eighteenth century was Lutf Ali Beg Azar who wrote '*Atishkadeh*' (Fire Temple) which is a critical analysis of about eight hundred poets. (30)

It must be pointed out here that Persian prose writing under the Safawids was also effectively used in clever dispatches to the Sunni Court of Ottoman rulers of Turkey.

APPRAISAL OF CLASSICAL PERSIAN PROSE

The concept of 'literature' in the classical tradition of Persian was synonymous with Persian poetry. Persian prose was primarily used for utilitarian purposes especially in scholarship, religion, and administrative affairs of the government. Again, in all these domains Persian was competing with Arabic. In theology, science and literary scholarship, Persian works mostly consisted of different versions of highly sophisticated works in Arabic. In this genre the best example is that of "*Kimiya-i-Sa'adat*" (The Alchemy of Happiness), written after 1096 A.D. by the renowned theologian and mystic Abu Hamid Muhammad Ghazali, which is a condensed version of the author's own work in Arabic on Islamic ethics, the *Ihy-ul-Uloom al-Din* (The Revival of Religious Sciences).

The Sufis (mystics) of Iran have left a particularly rich heritage of Persian prose writing which include *Malfuzat*, *Maktubat*, mystical commentaries on the Holy Quran, and treatises on Sufistic topics. The oldest and most important work has been the 11th century *Kashful Mahjub* (Unveiling of the Veiled) by Sheikh Hurjwiri, a treatise on Sufism followed by the 12th century *Sawaneh* (Fables of Mind), an essay written on the psychology of mystical and secular love by Ahmad Ghazali, a brother of the famous theologian Muhammad Ghazali. Many *Tazkiras* were also written which were an amalgam of biography and anthology. The *Tazkiras* became a regular feature after Awfi's *Lubab al-Albab* (The Quintessence of the Hearts), written in India in the 13th century. These *Tazkiras* became a rich source of knowledge about the lives of the Persian poets.

Other prose works in the classical period were mostly written by the members of the state bureaucracy. It was from

the 13th century A.D., under the Mongols, that flowery style of writing Persian prose came into being and became a model of prestigious Persian prose, not only in official writings but also in other genres of writing.

MODERN PERSIAN PROSE

UNDER THE QAJARS

Modern period of Persian prose opens with early Qajar and pre-constitutional era when modernizing influences first began to manifest not only in Persian life but also in letters which were greatly influenced by the advent of new political factors and an increased social consciousness. The credit of revolutionizing the spirit of modern Persian prose partly lies on the fact that the writers of the nineteenth century took as their models older and pre-Mongol writers, but mainly on the development of historiography (*Tawarikh*), travelogues (*Safarnameh*), translation of Western literary works, and growth of journalism in Iran. It was the press which awakened among the Iranian masses an interest in matters social and political. All these factors prepared a language for the expression of social and political events and led to the development of novels, short story writing and drama which were facilitated by the political and social scenario.

In this context it may be emphasized here that a great literary revival, in fact, began in early nineteenth century in prose literature in the wake of renewed cultural contacts between Iran and the Western world, which gathered momentum in the twentieth century due to the reforms which took place in official correspondence led by two great prime minister of Iran: The Qaim Maqam Farahni (1779-1830) and the Amir Kabir (1807-1852). Later, innovations came from two political and literary

figures: Mirza Malkom Khan (1833-1908) and Abdul Rahim Talibuff (1855-1910).

In the later nineteenth century, genres of writing hitherto unknown to classical Persian prose literature were introduced by the playwrights Mirza Jafar Qarachadaghi and Mirza Aqa Tabrizi, and the novelists Abdul Rahim Talibuff and Zainul Abedin. Their criticisms of political and social conditions helped to prepare the minds of the intellectuals for political changes. In the first decade of the twentieth century this developed into a revolutionary mood that burst out in an uprising against the autocratic rule of the Qajar Shah and came to be referred to Constitutional Revolution and in 1906 a constitution and a parliament (*Majlis*) were instituted in Iran. Ali Akbar Dekhoda, an influential satirist at this time, made a singular contribution to modernization of Persian prose.

UNDER THE PAHLAVIS

During the reign of Raza Shah Pahlavi (1925-1941), the heroism of the past was reviewed but mass media (press) and publications were subjected to strict vigil and constant censorship. Consequently writers who persisted in freedom of expression and crossed the policies of the state were exiled or imprisoned which, in turn, restricted the pace of writing.

Modern prose owes much to the small volume of short stories *Yake bud, Yake nabud* (Once Upon a Time) published in 1921, by Muhammad Ali Jamalzade. These stories became a landmark in the development of realistic prose narrative. Following in his footsteps Sadeq Hedayat wrote *Buf-i-kur* (The Blind Owl) in 1937, which found international recognition and was translated into many languages. It is a surrealist novella about frenzy and disappointment.

After Reza Shah's fall in 1941, when for a short period there was greater freedom of the press in Iran, another generation of prose writers emerged, the most prominent representative of which were: Sadaq Chubak, a clever writer whose short stories show the influence of the American novelist Hemingway, and Jalal Al-e-Ahmad, whose long essay *Gharabzadegi* (1962, Westoxication) became widely influential as an indictment of the slavish imitation of the West in Iranian Society under the Pahlavi regime. Simin Daneshvar, wife of Jalal al-e-Ahmad, had much success with her novel *Savushun* (1969, The Sacrifice) which describes the disruption of traditional society by foreign occupation during World War II. Among prose writers of the later twentieth century, the influence of modern narrative techniques, inspired by Western writers such as James Joyce and William Faulkner, was strong; particularly in the works of Hushung Golshiri. His depiction of the decay of the ancient Iranian aristocracy in *Shahzadeh Ehtejab* (1968; Prince Ehtejab), a short novel that is one of many instances, depicting the symbiosis of literature and the visual and performing arts in modern Persian literature. In this genre of writing one can add Ghulam Husayn Sa'edi who wrote short stories as well as plays for the theatre.

The participation of woman writers in modern literature increased considerably during the second half of the 20th century. Best known outside Iran is Shahnoush Parsipour's novella *Zanan bidun-i-mardan* (1978, Women Without Men), which recounts the attempts of five women to overcome the limitations put upon their lives by male dominance in a traditional society. Like other contemporary writers, Parsipour uses the narrative technique of magic realism in imitation of Latin American authors such as Gabriel Garcia Marques. In the later 20th century, the techniques of social realism of Mahmoud Dawlatabadi stands out. His great novel *Kelidar*, name of a village in

Khurasan published in 1978-84 in ten parts, depicts the lives of nomads in the plains of Khurasan, the author's region.

POST – 1979 REVOLUTION

Soon after 1979 Revolution in Iran Persian prose writing rose to such prominence that it even surpassed Persian poetic forms as the rudiment literary medium for the expression of social concern, cultural issues, problems of identity, class struggle, political dissent, and, eventually gender relations and sexuality. But this was short lived. The status, style and thematic contents of Persian prose writing changed from nineties of the last century. With censorship having been imposed once again no books or magazines are published without obtaining prior permission from the ministry of Cultural Relations. Therefore, post-revolutionary Persian literature now appears in two parts: one inside Iran; the other, written by exiles and immigrants scattered across the world, particularly in Europe and North America. Apart from its interaction with modern world literature, contemporary Persian writing draws on a rich heritage of classical literature. The sociopolitical upheaval of 1979 Revolution has strengthened the popularity of prose writing in modern novels and short-story writing which enables ordinary people to enjoy prose narratives.

After having said all this, in the post-Revolutionary Period, there has been a rather confused medley of literary production in Iran.

APPRAISAL OF MODERN PERSIAN PROSE

In a brief appraisal of modern Persian prose writing, it is quite obvious that the advancement and progress in it has been the result of political and social writing than purely literary

activity. If we study it carefully, we will find that political unrest, awakening of the people after a long slumber, and overwhelming sense of patriotism, on the one hand, and evaluation of the place of man in society, on the others, have prompted prose writers, such as, novelists, playwrights and short story writers to place directly their views before the public so that social, political and national problems are understood and faced, and attempts are made to reform them. Modern Persian prose literature also attempts to discharge the constructive role of educating the people at large and tries to extract them from the rut of sluggish conservatism and out-moded ideas and imageries of medievalism. It also acquaints them with advanced and progressive views quite compatible to present day life and encourages and coaxes them to make it nobler.

CONCLUSION

This in brief is an overview of origin, growth and development of Persian literature over the centuries to the modern times. If we analyse it objectively in the linguistic sphere, Persian was responsible for transmitting to the Muslim world a substantial collection of ancient Iranian art, tales, fables, myths as well as history, moral instructions, political advices, and religious treaties which made a remarkable contribution to effervescence of Muslim spirituality in the medieval period, both directly as well as through the medium of Arabic.

Persian literature has also made a significant and lasting effect through the translations of its extraordinary lyrical and romantic poetry, together with mystical and didactic treatises in prose, on literatures of the world and is universally acknowledged as one of the great literatures of mankind.

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GLOSSARY

The mystical poets of Persia used imagery in their compositions of *Ghazals* (lyrics), *Ruba'is* (quatrains) and *Nazams* (poems) where the language of human love was used freely to describe the relations between the mystic and his Divine Beloved and Sufi poets followed the same pattern in their mystical compositions. In order to understand the love of allegory and to grasp the inner meaning of the allusions given in the compositions of the Sufi poets, which, in fact, give them spiritual values, it is necessary to understand the interpretation of their technical vocabulary based on the interpretation of Mohsin Faïd Kashani, a Persian Sufi author of the seventeenth century, who wrote in his small treatise *Risala-i-Mishwaq*, in order to defend the Sufi poets against their mainstream orthodox critics. Some of these are explained here :

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1. ABROO (Eye-brow) | : | God's Attributes, which conceal His Essence |
| 2. ABID | : | Devotee. |
| 3. ADAB (Decent manners) | : | In religious conduct. |
| 4. AHZAB , Sing. HIZB , | : | Prayers. |
| 5. BAHR (Sea) QULZUM (Ocean) | : | The revelation of the Divine Essence. To the Sufi whole world is like a vault (<i>kumk-hana</i>) containing wine of Being and the inborn love of God; each atom of the world is a |

paimana (goblet) of the wine of His love, and the goblet is full of this wine.

6. **BAQA**

: Continuance.

7. **BUT** (Idol)

: Every object of worship other than God. It also indicates a manifestation of the Divine Beauty; sometimes it connotes a Perfect Man (*Insan-al-Kamil*) or a Guide (*Murshid*) who is the Pole (*Qutab*) of his time.

8. **CHASHM** (Eye)

: God's beholding the aptitude of His Servants. The "Eye" is *mast* (intoxicated) or *bimar* (languishing) to indicate that He has no need of man. The *ghamza* (glance) of the "eye" refers to God's granting of spiritual repose after anguish or anguish after repose.

9. **DU'A** (Prayer)

: Being constantly suppliant to God.

10. **FIQH**

: Religious law, juristic literature.

11. **FIRASA** (Insight)

: As the Prophet said, "Beware of the the believer's insight, for he sees with the Light of God."

12. **FUTUWA** (Chivalrousness)

: Fulfilling the terms of Tradition with complete self-disregard.

13. **HAYA** (Shame)

: A Shame of being found wanting in sincerity.

14. **HURRIYA** (Magnanimity)

: The quality of being *hurr*, a "freeman", putting the interests of others before one's own.

15. **HUZN** (Sorrow)

: For past sin.

16. **ISHQ-I-HAQIQI**

: The Love Divine.

17. **ISHQ-I-MAJAZI**

: The worldly love or banal love.

18. **ISTIQAMA** (Uprightness)

: A state in which God's grace becomes perpetual and it implies perfect performance of God's service.

19. JAM (Cup) : The revelation of (Divine) Acts.
20. KHAL (Mole) : The point of Real Unity, which is concealed and is represented as black.
21. KHANQAH : The convent or hospice.
22. KHATT (Down on the cheek) : The manifestation of Reality in spiritual forms.
23. KHARABAT (Tavern) : Pure Unity (*wahadat*)
24. KHARABATI (Tavern-haunter) : The true lover who is freed from the snare of discrimination and who believes that all acts and qualities merge in Divine Acts and qualities.
25. KHUSHU : Fearfulness, humility.
26. LAB (Lip) : The life giving property of God, and His keeping man in existence. The *Dahan* (mouth) is said to be narrow as a reference that the source of man's being is invisible.

27. MA'ARIFA (Gnosis) : Which appears to mark the transition in complete annihilation in God, or passing away in God.
28. MUJAHADA : The earnest seeker after the mystical life. It is a collateral form of *jihad* (the so-called "Holy War").
29. MURID, SHAGIRD : The disciple.
30. QANA'A (Contentment) : The Prophet said, "Contentment is an imperishable treasure."
31. RUKH (Face, Cheek) : The revelation of Divine Beauty in Attributes of Grace, for example, the Gracious, the Clement, the Lifegiving, the Guide, the Bountiful, Light, and Divine Reality.
32. SABR (Patience) : Fortitude.
33. SABU (Pitcher) KHUM (Jar) : The revelation of Divine Names and Qualities.
34. SAQI (Wine-bearer) : Reality, as loving to manifest itself in every form that is revealed.

35. SAKHA, JUD (Bounty, Generosity) : The Prophet said that bountiful and generous man is near to God and near to men.
36. SUMT (Silence) : It is interpreted both literally, as meaning that a man should learn to govern his tongue, and metaphorically, as referring to a heart that silently accepts whatever God may decree.
37. SHEIKH, PIR : The elder, the saintly person.
38. SHARAB (Wine) : Ecstatic experience due to the revelation of the True Beloved, destroying the foundations of reason.
39. SIDQ (Truthfulness) : In thought and act.
40. SOHBA : Companionship.
41. TABAQAAT : Classes.
42. TAQWA (the awe of God) : To strengthen the resolve and escape Divine chastisement.
43. TAUHID : True belief in One God.
44. ZAHID : Abstainer.

45. ZIKR (Recollection) : Remembrance Of God.
46. ZULF (Tress) : The revelation of Divine Majesty in Attributes Of Omnipotence, for example, the Withholder, the Seizer, the Omnipotent, the Deluder; Darkness; phenomena as a veil of concealing Divine Reality.

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